



A TIME TO SING: THE NECESSITY OF SURPASSING SILENCE

Tempo de cantar: a necessidade de ultrapassar o silêncio

Clovis Salgado Gontijo *

ABSTRACT: By considering the limitation of discursive language before the intimate experience with God, many Christian mystics adopted or recommended silence as a response to that experience. Nevertheless, in his *Expositions of the Psalms*, Saint Augustine, despite endorsing the recurrent suspicion regarding logos, advises against silence. Before something that can neither be talked about nor fallen silent before, the solution would be to sing with *jubilus*, a song of exultation without words, practiced at that time. The present article will examine this curious prescription, checking firstly the possible limitations of silence as a form of expression (be it general or mystical experience) and, secondly, how music could reveal itself as the most adequate response to an experience of the transcendent. For this purpose, besides Saint Augustine's *Expositions*, texts by contemporary authors including Ludwig Wittgenstein, Vladimir Jankélévitch and Susanne Langer will be considered, all of whom were attentive to the theme of ineffability.

KEYWORDS: Silence. *Jubilus*. Expression. Ineffable. Music.

RESUMO: Ao reconhecerem a limitação da linguagem discursiva diante da experiência íntima com Deus, diversos místicos cristãos adotaram ou recomendaram o silêncio como resposta para tal experiência. Contudo, em seus *Comentários aos Salmos*, Santo Agostinho, embora endosse a reiterada desconfiança pelo logos, contraindica o silêncio. Diante do que não se pode falar nem se calar, a solução seria jubilar, aconselha o santo, remetendo-se a um gênero musical do período, o *jubilus*, canto de exultação sem palavras. Neste artigo, examinar-se-á essa curiosa

* Faculdade Jesuíta de Filosofia e Teologia, Belo Horizonte, Minas Gerais, Brazil.

prescrição, verificando, primeiramente, quais as limitações do silêncio como modo de expressão (seja em geral, seja da experiência mística) e, em segundo lugar, de que forma a música poderia se manifestar como resposta mais consentânea a uma experiência do transcendente. Para tanto, recorrer-se-á a textos não só de Santo Agostinho, mas de autores contemporâneos como Ludwig Wittgenstein, Vladimir Jankélévitch e Susanne Langer, sensíveis ao tema do inefável.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Silêncio. Júbilo. Expressão. Inefável. Música.

Introduction

The reflections elaborated in this article have as their main motivation the analysis by Saint Augustine, found in the *Expositions of the Psalms* 32 and 99, of a musical genre of his time, the *jubilus*, an exclusively vocalized liturgical song of agricultural origin, provided with an exulting character, as indicated by its name. The bishop of Hippo recommends the faithful or the community to respond precisely with the intonation without words of the *jubilus* to the intimate and intense communion with the divine, before which it would be inappropriate not only to *speak*, but also to *fall silent*. In this way, the limitations of language could be compensated by the possibilities of music, specially a music completely detached from verbal discourse.

This article will highlight, firstly, the usual positive valorization of silence as a spiritual attitude by the Neoplatonic and Christian traditions, followed by the Augustinian references to the *jubilus* that contrast to that valorization. It will describe and put in context, secondly, the musical genre under discussion, using as a theoretical basis the study *Canticum novum: música sem palavras e palavras sem som no pensamento de Santo Agostinho* (*Canticum novum: music without words and words without sound on Saint Augustine's thought*), by Lorenzo Mammì, which will be also referred to in other sections of this article. The Augustinian rejection of silence and recommendation of singing the *jubilus* will lead to two fundamental problems, which will be respectively discussed in the article's third and fourth sections. Firstly (section 3), why would it not be recommended to fall silent during, or even after, the jubilant fulfilment of the soul by the divine? In this sense, what would be the possible "counterindications" of silence to the expression both of the contact with the Highest Ineffable and of non-spiritual experiences? Secondly (section 4), why would the *jubilus* as a musical genre – and, somehow, all music – be able to offer a more adequate response to a spiritual event?

Although those problems were motivated by the *Expositions of the Psalms*, they will not be exclusively examined through the Augustinian thou-

ght. The article will consult equally Catholic writers of other historical periods (Saint John of the Cross, Sister Juana Inés de la Cruz and Saint Elizabeth of the Trinity) and contemporary philosophers who discussed, in association or not, the themes that had been anticipated and connected by Saint Augustine, namely: the limits of discursive language and the possibilities of music as an ineffable expression or as an expression of the ineffable (Ludwig Wittgenstein, Vladimir Jankélévitch and Susanne K. Langer). Despite eventually appearing throughout our analysis, two of those philosophers will be separately examined in the fourth section of the article. This section will identify, firstly, the possible reasons of the recommendation of the song without words in the specific context of the *Expositions of the Psalms* (topic 4.1) and then look for other justifications that could support that recommendation based on the works of Langer (topic 4.2) and Jankélévitch (topic 4.3).

Through that itinerary, it will be seen that the bishop of Hippo knew to identify the fundamental aspects of language (in a broad sense), of human silence, and of music that are not circumscribed to a specific historical period or to Christian spirituality, bringing up rich questions and anthropological, aesthetic and linguistic reflections.

1 The mystical valorization of silence

We may observe, in different moments of Judeo-Christian tradition, a suggestive valorization of silence in the spheres of both the contents of faith and of spiritual life. In one of the most poetic teophanies of the Old Testament, the Lord “does not come [to prophet Elijah] with the noise of wrathfulness but as imperceptibly as a breeze” (JANKÉLÉVITCH, 2003, p. 149), that is, as an almost imperceptible rumor, similar to silence. Despite being identified with the Word on the Foreword of the Gospel according to Saint John (Jn 1,1), God usually does not respond to our doubts through univocal words. Therefore, in order to recognize the signs, sometimes equivocal, that echo from the Creator, it is necessary to pay double attention. In short, it is necessary to be in silence to enjoy the fruits or to interpret divine silence. Christ himself assumes that attitude (Mk 1,35; Lk 5,16), while spending several nights “in seclusion, in silence, far away from the crowds, keeping vigil and praying” (FOUCAULD, 1958, p. 151, my translation), perhaps as an example for others, as Saint Charles of Foucauld suggests, since he was permanently united to the Father.

The Christian mystics also knew how to value silence in a special way. Considering the assimilation of the Greek culture by Christianity, the appraisal of silence by our mystics communicates with the reverence of the initiate towards the old mysteries, before which the former should close

the eyes and the mouth¹, or with the Neoplatonic thought, according to which the human being in search of a reencounter with the One, as Plotinus teaches, should renounce the use of the words in the last steps of the ascesis and embrace “the ‘word that is mute’, *lovgo*” *siwpuw’n*. From this point on, one no longer even need ask a question; it is sufficient to be silent and understand (...). Not daring to offer even a single word, the wise man will soar into God’s presence once he has abandoned *logos*”² (JANKÉLÉVITCH, 2003, p. 147).

Therefore, our biblical sources, our philosophical affiliations and our own experience of God seem to support the mystical exaltation of silence, understood as the most appropriate attitude or response to the divine approximation. In this perspective, the German mystic Angelus Silesius, assuming, in accordance with Neoplatonism, the super-essential nature of God, defends, in one of the aphorisms that compose *The Cherubinic Wanderer*: “So high above all things that be / Is God uplifted, man can dare / No utterance: he prayed best / When Silence is his sum of prayer” (SILESIUS, 2015). And, in another aphorism, the author from the 17th century, emphasizing the correspondence between the silence of God and the expected attitude from the believer, expresses in an interrogative form a discomfort that is still contemporarily experienced: “Thinkest thou, foolish man, that with thy clapping tongue / Praise of the silent Godhead fitly can be sung?” (SILESIUS, 2015).

The Carmelite spirituality, related, since its origin, to a secluded and contemplative life, has also honored silence in a very special way. That honor could be observed both in the explicit praise to quietness and implicitly in the radical act of the mystic who prefers falling silent to describing his or her intimate experience with the transcendent, for finding fewer risks in silence than in discourse.

In order to exemplify the first possibility, we could quote one excerpt of the writings by Saint Elizabeth of the Trinity, a Carmelite monk of the late 19th century. The young nun, who was a promising pianist before entering the monastery, was also provided with accurate ears for silence, which she directly identifies with the act of adoration:

Adoration, ah! That is a word from Heaven! It seems to me it can be defined as the ecstasy of love. It is love overcome by the beauty, the strength, the immense grandeur of the Object loved, and it “falls down in a kind of faint” in an utterly profound silence, that silence of which David spoke when he exclaimed: “Silence is Your praise!” Yes, this is the most beautiful praise since it is sung eternally in the bosom of the tranquil Trinity; and it is also “the last effort of

¹ The term “mystery” is usually linked to the Greek root *mnvw*, whose meaning would be exactly to close (the eyes or the lips) in a reverential attitude. However, that etymology is doubtful, according to some authors (LIA, P. In: *Enciclopedia Filosofica*, 2006, p. 7470).

² A reference to the *Ennead* III 8, 6, by Plotinus.

the soul that overflows and can say no more..." (Lacordaire) (ELIZABETH OF THE TRINITY, no date)

Regarding the preference, of a more performative than laudatory character, for silence, we could recall the decision taken by Saint John of the Cross at the end of the explanations (*declaraciones*) given by himself to his poem *The Living Flame of Love*. The mystical poet of the 16th century who, as his French successor, also directly praises the "*música callada*" in his *Spiritual Canticle* (JUAN DE LA CRUZ, 2000, p. 696, 793), would rather not examine the last three verses of the *Flame*, after explaining three and a half stanzas of the poem. That option is justified in the final paragraph of the book's first version in the following terms:

I would not speak of this breathing of God, neither do I wish to do so, because I am certain that I cannot; and indeed were I to speak of it, it would seem then to be something less than what it is in reality. This breathing of God is in the soul, in which in the awakening of the deep knowledge of the Divinity, He breathes the Holy Ghost according to the measure of that knowledge which absorbs it most profoundly, which inspires it most tenderly with love according to what it saw. This breathing is full of grace and glory, and therefore the Holy Ghost fills the soul with goodness and glory, whereby He inspires it with the love of Himself, transcending all glory and all understanding. This is the reason why I say nothing more. (JOHN OF THE CROSS, 1919, p. 129)

How would it be possible to use verbal language, especially in the register of an explicative discourse that deals with concepts and argumentations, to describe an experience beyond "all glory and all understanding"? Before what cannot be properly expressed by language, it is wiser to fall silent and to abort the elucidative task that causes in the poet, from the very beginning, a kind of disgust (JUAN DE LA CRUZ, 2000, p. 945). Many centuries later, a philosopher endowed with a considerable mystical vocation, Ludwig Wittgenstein, would draw a similar conclusion which also lead him to an attitude similar to the Carmelite saint. After identifying the conditions of possibility of propositional language and the contents that can be discursively articulated, the Austrian thinker recognizes a strand that concerns something more essential, concerning "not *how* the world is, is the mystical, but *that* it is" (*Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* 6.44, in WITTGENSTEIN, 1933, p. 187, emphasis original), unprojectable within the frames of propositions. In the approach to the mystical register of the ineffable³, it is necessary to follow the example given by Plotinus and to be consistent as Saint John of the Cross, conscious of the absurdities (*dislates*⁴) to which that discourse inevitably leads to. Therefore, more than simply praising silence, the mystic should radically embrace it and

³ "There is indeed the inexpressible. This *shows* itself; it is the mystical." (*Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* 6.522, in: WITTGENSTEIN, 1933, p. 187, emphasis of the author)

⁴ Cf. Foreword of the *Spiritual Canticle* (JUAN DE LA CRUZ, 2000, p. 692, 1134).

interrupt any attempt of explanation. "Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent" (*Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* 7, in: WITTGENSTEIN, 1933, p. 189): with those notorious words, Wittgenstein concludes his *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, in accordance with a large mystic tradition of a negative approach.

2 The Augustinian solution: one should not speak, nor fall silent; one should jubilate

Despite being recurrently exulted and practiced by Christian and non-Christian mystics of different centuries, silence was not always taken as a proper response – or as the only possible response – to the experiences of approach to the divinity. As we have anticipated in our introduction, one of the most classical rejections of silence was formulated by Saint Augustine, more precisely in his *Expositions to the Psalms* (*Enarrationes in Psalmos*) 32 and 99.

Dedicated to the interpretation of psalms that deal with the musical praise of God⁵, those texts, of great importance to the history of Christian spirituality as well as to the history of music and of Western aesthetics, reflect on a particular liturgical musical genre: the *jubilus* (jubilation). According to Lorenzo Mammì, a specialist on Saint Augustine and an art critic, the noun *jubilus*

was introduced in the Latin versions of the Bible to translate the Hebrew term *terua* (or *ṭrûʿah*), *tremolo* or *staccato* produced by the *shofar*, a trumpet made of sheep horn. The tone range of the *shofar* was limited to the first harmonics. Incapable of playing melodic scales, the instrument was only used to military or ritualistic signs. By extension, *terua* began to indicate a rhythmic shout of war, being mentioned in this sense in many passages of the Old Testament. It indicates, in the *Psalms*, a ritualistic shout or formula, connected to sacrifices and to processions. (MAMMÌ, 2000, p. 350, my translation)

That old practice was already lost in the Roman Empire, since "the *terua* did not continue to be practiced after the diaspora" (MAMMÌ, 2000, p. 350, our translation). Nevertheless, something in the *terua* has a similarity with the *jubilus*, "that, in Imperial Latin, indicates standardized cries of soldiers or peasants" (MAMMÌ, 2000, p. 350, our translation). Probably,

⁵ We read, in the third versicle of the Psalm 33 (32),1-3: "Rejoice in the Lord, O you righteous. / Praise befits the upright. / Praise the Lord with the lyre; / make melody to him with the harp of ten strings. / Sing to him a new song; / play skillfully on the strings, / with loud shouts." As to the Psalm 100 (99), it begins with the following prescription (versicles 1-2): "Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth. / Worship the Lord with gladness; / come into his presence with singing."

both shared a rhythmic character and are applicable to contexts of exaltation or acclamation (be it due to the victory in a battle, be it due to a generous harvest). Regarding the specific case of the Christian *jubilus*, in continuity with the practices of popular music at that time (songs of cultivation), it should “have been something like a short refrain in a clear and pronounced beat that the whole assembly could sing together with the priest” (MAMMÌ, 2000, p. 350, my translation). Besides that, according to the valuable information provided by Saint Augustine, the *jubilus* was characterized as a *song without words*, intoned as a pure vocalization, although it cannot be misidentified, as Mammì explains, with the well-known melismatic forms of Gregorian chant, by virtue of its rhythmic and communitarian dimension. We should highlight that, precisely for its exclusively vocalic constitution,

the *jubilus* seems to be an aesthetic achievement of Christianity. The Classical thought ignores the idea of a song deprived from words. The melismatic song is also strange to Jewish tradition, especially after the destruction of the second Temple in A.D. 70, when, in a sign of grief, the instruments and all elaborated musical manifestations were abolished from the service. Since then, Hebrew music has been exclusively devoted to the psalmodic reading of the Bible and its dependence to the text became complete. (MAMMÌ, 2000, p. 349-350, my translation)

Following this brief introductory synthesis on the *jubilus*, let us return to Saint Augustine, to see how he relates that liturgical musical genre to an emphatic refusal of silence, in the two mentioned *Expositions of the Psalms*. Starting from the Psalm 99, the bishop of Hippo observes in its exposition the following process of transformation in the one who feels God’s deep presence:

Before you became so vividly aware of him you thought yourself qualified to speak about God; but now you begin to feel what he is, and you realize that what you perceive is something that cannot be spoken. But if you have discovered that the reality you encounter is beyond utterance, will you therefore fall silent, and not praise him? Will you be struck dumb and cease to praise God, and no longer give thanks to him who has willed to make himself known to you? While you were seeking him you praised him; will you fall silent now that you have found him? Of course not: you could not be ungrateful. (...) “And how shall I praise him” you ask. (...) so listen to the psalm: *Shout with joy to the Lord, all earth*. If you shout with joy to the Lord, you have understood how all the earth shouts its joy. (AUGUSTINE, 2003, p. 18)

Concerning Psalm 32, we locate in it a passage that intimately relates the recommendation of the *jubilus*, presented in opposition with the refusal of silence, to the vocalic nature of the former. As the author of the *Confessions* explains,

Think of people who sing at harvest time, or in the vineyard, or at any work that goes with a swing. They begin by caroling their joys in words, but after

a while they seem to be so full of gladness that they find words no longer adequate to express it, so they abandon distinct syllables and words, and resort to a single cry of jubilant happiness. Jubilation is a shout of joy; it indicates that the heart is bringing forth what defies speech. To whom, then, is this jubilation more fittingly offered than to God who surpasses all utterance? You cannot speak of him because he transcends our speech; and if you cannot speak of him, yet may not remain silent, what else can you do but cry out in jubilation, so that your heart may tell its joy without words, and the unbounded rush of gladness not be cramped by syllables? *Sing skillfully to him in jubilation.* (AUGUSTINE, 2000, p. 401)

It is impossible to read this excerpt without recalling the already mentioned final aphorism of the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, written approximately 1,500 years later. On one hand, Saint Augustine seems to agree with Wittgenstein⁶ and with many mystical writers, in his view that verbal “language is a specially limited instrument the more the content to be expressed is spiritual. There are contents that are too profound to fit in human language” (MAMMÌ, 2000, p. 356, my translation). On the other hand, despite that common acknowledgement, the bishop of Hippo contradicts the norm prescribed by the Austrian philosopher, presenting a different response to the contact with the Ineffable: “and if you cannot speak of him, yet may not remain silent, what else can you do but cry out in jubilation (...)”⁷.

Here we come across the central problems of this article. Why, in opposition to the recurrent teachings of a mystical tradition followed by Wittgenstein, Saint Augustine does not ask us to be quiet “before” the Ineffable? And, besides that, why the song – and, in this context, the song of *jubilus* in particular – is indicated by the theologian of the early Christianity as an appropriate way of expression of what cannot be said?

3 Why cannot one fall silent?

We could envisage some reasons by which silence is not recommended by Saint Augustine. Firstly, we notice that both Wittgenstein, in the *Tractatus*, and Saint John of the Cross, in the *declaraciones* prepared for *The Living Flame of Love* are moving within the limits of discursive language that, as we know, is not apt to explain or at least to thoroughly clarify the ineffable. Therefore, one who treads that limited road is bound to face at some

⁶ It is important to bear in mind that Wittgenstein was a reader of Saint Augustine, as we may confirm in the *Philosophical Investigations*, whose first part starts quoting a passage by the bishop of Hippo (WITTGENSTEIN, 1979, p. 9). Therefore, the similarity between the last aphorism of the *Tractatus* and the aforementioned passage of the Exposition of the Psalm 32 may not be merely accidental.

⁷ “(...) *et si eum fari non potes, et tacere non debes, quid restat nisi ut iubiles*” (AUGUSTINE, apud MAMMÌ, 2000, p. 362).

moment the need of refusing the predicates that are built by language or even of denying the resource of speech itself. Saint Augustine, in turn, employs the discourse, in the two *Expositions of the Psalms*, not only as a means for elaborating his reflection, but also to evoke a non-discursive meaning, capable of expressing in a more satisfactory and intense way, the joy of the (ineffable) encounter with (the ineffable) God. Although the text still provides the reader with some understanding of the features of that encounter, the fuller and truer understanding of the experience in question occurs, according to the author, in another level, the *jubilus*, defined as “to grasp the fact that what is sung in the heart cannot be articulated in words” (AUGUSTINE, 2000, p. 401).

Besides the opening to something that could not be offered by the text of explanatory tenor itself, the context of the two commented psalms could also justify the examined refusal of silence. Contrarily to the silent praise experienced and formulated by Saint Elizabeth of the Trinity, the praise that is described by those psalms – and associated to the musical genre *jubilus* – is expansive, manifesting itself in intense and vibrant sonorities. Therefore, the Psalm 33 (32) prescribes that the believers offer, *exultantly*, a “new song” to the Lord, playing “skillfully” the lyre and the “harp of ten strings”, “in the time of the *ovation*” (emphasis mine). Meanwhile, the Psalm 100 (99) summons “all the earth” to acclaim the Lord “with gladness” and “jubilant shouts”. That enthusiastic disposition radically contrasts with silent introspection. Therefore, we should not fall silent when the word of God invites us to respond to Him in an exulting praise that is diametrically opposed to silence.⁸

Another obvious justification may be extracted from the passage of the Exposition of Psalm 99, included in the previous section. Mutism could be easily understood as a sign of ingratitude. That is what occurs in the sphere of our interpersonal relationships. We learn, from a very early age, from the basic rules of politeness, that we should externalize the recognition of a favor granted by someone with at least a simple “thank you”. It is not admissible that a person somehow favored entirely avoids a language formed by words, gestures or by the combination between the two. From this point of view, there could not be a greater ingratitude than not sharing, if not with the celestial Father “who is in secret” (Mt 6,6), with our faith community, the concession of the greater grace that we, humans, are able to experience: the intimate knowledge of God.⁹ And, considering

⁸ As Saint Augustine asks his listener in the already quoted passage of the Exposition of the Psalm 99: “But if you have discovered that the reality you encounter is beyond utterance, will you therefore fall silent, and not praise him?”

⁹ The believer’s ingratitude appears, in Saint Augustine’s text, directly associated to the absence of a response addressed to God (“Will you be struck dumb and cease to praise God, and no longer give thanks to him who has willed to make himself known to you?”) and not to the community. That position sounds strange to our contemporary mentality, due to the

the loftiness of the experienced grace, the response should proportionally manifest itself as fervent thanksgiving.

Once again, we come through with the theme of intensity that, by itself, without any connection to the biblical sources or to the problem of gratitude, would also justify the Augustinian prescription. Although Elizabeth of the Trinity, quoting the Dominican friar Lacordaire, interprets certain modality of silence as “the last effort of the soul that overflows and can say no more”, we generally believe that an extremely intense emotion tends to overflow in a literal sense, that is, “to flow over the brim of” an enclosed body. Similarly to the “silent praise”, the introspective overflowing is practically an oxymoron, a figure that, by the way, is highly esteemed by the mystics.¹⁰ Therefore, if we return to the Augustinian example, the jubilation experienced by the believer (and by the community as well) is so powerful that it is *not possible to restrain it* nor to suffocate it in mutism: *it is necessary to pour it out*.

As we revise the complete texts of the expositions of the two psalms, we verify in them the presence of many terms that emphasize the intensity of joy, connected with the Paulinian theme of the overabundance of grace (which allows, in its turn, the analogy between the *jubilus* and the agricultural activity). Therefore, Saint Augustine resorts to words and expressions such as “the immensity of joy”, “plenty crop” (AUGUSTINE, 2003, p. 14), “the fecundity and the bounty of the earth” (AUGUSTINE, 2003, p. 14), “elation” (AUGUSTINE, 2003, p. 14). Besides that, in his analysis of the *jubilus*, the saint relates, in the same passage, that emotional intensity with the tendency of effusion, as it occurs in the Exposition of Psalm 99:

A person who is shouting with gladness does not bother to articulate words. The shout is a wordless sound of joy; it is the cry of a mind *expanded with gladness*, expressing its feelings as best it can rather than comprehending the sense. When someone is exulting and happy he passes beyond words that can be spoken and understood, and *bursts forth* into a wordless cry of exultation. Such a person is clearly rejoicing vocally, but he is *so full of intense joy* that

belief of the divine omniscience (God would not need the exteriorization of our feeling as a certificate of gratitude) and to the conception deepened in modern mysticism that the mystic’s silent response would be compatible with the manifestation of spiritual grace (section 1).

¹⁰ If we consider the Latin verb *laudare*, which is employed in the *Expositions of the Psalms* and originated the Portuguese verb *louvar*, we verify that, in its etymology, the term is associated to something that is *called* or named, later mostly in a favorable way, as in the context of a funeral praise (ERNOUT; MEILLET, 1979, p. 346). Therefore, the idea of a “silent praise” would be somehow contradictory, although, as noticed, it has been used by some mystics and even by Saint Jerome in the translation of the Psalm 65 (64). Regarding the conception of an “introspective overflowing”, it would only make sense in a topology as the one suggested by Saint Teresa of Jesus in *The Interior Castle*, in which the soul, composed by “layers”, would allow the overflowing of certain experienced content from a more superficial to a deeper level.

he is unable to explain what makes him happy. (AUGUSTINE, 2003, p. 14, my emphasis)

It is also possible that the “intense joy” is not externalized, but simply kept in the subject’s interiority, without leaving sensible tracks. We come across, in this case, another reason to silence’s insufficiency: it could be easily mistaken as an emptiness of experience (not by God, obviously, but by the individual or by the religious community that faces the other’s mutism), a problem that was somehow implicit in the verbal omission characteristic of ingratitude, observed in the *Expositions*. As we observe in the history of Christian spirituality and even in other religious traditions, the mystic is prone to communicate, to register, to attest or to *show*, employing a Wittgensteinian concept¹¹, the effectivity and the fecundity of what touched him/her, even if in approximate terms. That deficiency of silence is exquisitely explained by an 18th century author, Sister Juana Inés de la Cruz. According to the Mexican poet,

since this [silence] is negative, although it explains a great deal with the emphasis on not explaining, it is necessary to add a brief explanation so that what one wishes the silence to say is understood; if not, the silence will say nothing, because that is its proper occupation: say nothing. The sacred chosen vessel was carried away to the third heaven, and having seen the arcane secrets of God, the text says: *He... heard secret words, which it is not granted to man to utter*. It does not say what he saw but says that he cannot say; and so it is necessary at least to say those things that cannot be said, so it is understood that being silent does not mean having nothing to say, but that the great deal there is to say cannot be said in words. (JUANA INÉS DE LA CRUZ, 2014)

Help understanding this passage can be found in the thought of Vladimir Jankélévitch, who, in certain continuity with the Neoplatonic and Christian mysticisms, identifies two opposite poles in which may be inserted the realities that we experience as inexpressible (JANKÉLÉVITCH, 1983, p. 92-97). There is, on one side, the negative inexpressible, baptized by the French philosopher as the *unsayable*, that, mainly represented by death, alludes to what we cannot define nor describe due to the absolute sterility or to the fact it does not present itself to our “possible experience”, employing a Kantian expression. It would also draw near the unsayable pole what is not absolutely empty to sensibility, but is situated below rationality, such as evil and sortileges (JANKÉLÉVITCH, 1983, p. 159-160). On the opposite side, there is the *ineffable*, the inexhaustibly positive inexpressible of music, of the “mystery of God”, of the “mystery of love, (...) the poetic mystery par excellence” (JANKÉLÉVITCH, 2003, p. 72), whose fecundity will always overflow

¹¹ The verb “to show” (*zeigen*) appears, in the *Tractatus*, in an explicit opposition to the sphere of the sayable (*Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* 6.36) and, therefore, it draws near, as noticed, to the spheres of the mystical and the ineffable (*Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* 6.522).

demonstrative language. Suggestively, Jankélévitch makes us envisage that opposition by two experiences of privative character, particularly appreciated by Christian mysticism: darkness and silence itself. In that sense, the philosopher formulates the following question: “Is not the distance between unsayable negativity and ineffable positivity as profound as the one between blind darkness and transparent night or between silence that is mute and silence that is tacit?” (JANKÉLÉVITCH, 1983, p. 94, my translation)

We may think that, in the presence of a person who is experiencing one of those silences, it would be possible to grasp, to a certain degree, the emptiness of “silence that is mute” or the plenitude of “silence that is tacit”, by their expression, be it of the eyes or of the body of the silent person. However, silence, if separately taken, could be inconclusive in its quality, even for those who are on intimate terms with whom expresses it. That point may be exemplified by a touching scene of the movie *The Bookshop*, directed by Isabel Coixet and based on Penelope Fitzgerald’s novel, when the character Kattie opens up to the protagonist Florence Green, confessing her own discomfort towards her boyfriend, Milo North:

I still don’t know what he thinks of me. Or if he feels something for me. Or, for that matter, if he feels anything at all. I guess that’s part of his thing. Keeping you guessing all the time. You know what they say: with that kind of man, you’ll never know whether he’s hiding a rich inner world or... absolutely nothing. (COIXET, 2017)¹²

If the silence of a near person may already “sound” ambiguous to whom listens to it, the silence practiced by the one who is geographically or temporally distant is destined to dissolve in emptiness. How could we know if the silence of a never responded letter was caused by the fact that the addressee had nothing to say (a sterility that comes close the *unsayable* pole) or that it cannot adjust to his/her voice “the great deal there is to say” (fecundity that is characteristic of the *ineffable* pole)? Now it becomes clearer the piece of advice given by Sister Juana Inés de la Cruz: “and so it is necessary at least to say those things that cannot be said”. According to that perspective, the strategy to mark the experience of the ineffable, at least in the sphere of the discourse, is not to be completely quiet, but to delimit silence with word.

Although the formulation of the Hispanic poet contrasts with the conclusion of the *Tractatus*, as it does not prescribe as a response to the ineffable experience a completely silent attitude, the Wittgensteinian aphorism accomplishes, in the act of enunciation itself, the demand of saying at least “those things that cannot be said”. Something similar occurs at the

¹² The movie *The Bookshop* is available in the streaming platform Netflix.

end of another text already mentioned in this article, *The Living Flame of Love*, where Saint John of the Cross suddenly interrupts the explanation of his verses not without remarking the recognition of the limits of language and his option of giving up the explanatory word. Therefore, the challenging discursive approach to the ineffable, as well as the awareness of the ineffable, seems to be outlined in that constant tension between the verbal register and everything that denies or surpasses it.

Jankélévitch is also attentive to some of the examined implications that go beyond the sphere of mystical experience and reports. On one hand, the philosopher concedes silence's emptiness of expressivity, when it manifests itself in an isolate way and, on the other, he verifies in some structures the necessity of strategically conjugating speech with silence. Those points may be observed in a passage of *L'Ironie*, a work of the young Jankélévitch, in which, through an analysis of the different human acts, sheer silence is put in contrast with reticence, a kind of figure of speech, gifted with an expressive function. According to the French thinker,

Halfway between "silence" and "allusion" stands the *reticence*, which is an active collaboration between silence and word, a repressed or swallowed word: not a repressed hatred, as rancor, but the contention of chatter, "interrupted serenade". One falls silent when it would be possible to speak. The reticence is the expiring discourse, the passage from the explicit to the tacit: threatening or ironic, the ellipsis that strangle our sentences somehow represent the scar left by the words that disappeared. Therefore, silence is an absence, while the reticence – that is, the "figure of silence" – is an expressive interruption, a kind of sonorous value, similar, in this sense, to the pauses and sighs of musical discourse. (JANKÉLÉVITCH, 1964, p. 89, emphasis of the author, my translation)

As the main theme of that book is irony, which supposes an awareness by the ironic person about the itinerary and the objective of his/her discourse, the latter's interruption is not derived from the learned ignorance of the mystics, but from a persuasive strategy. For that reason, regarding irony, "one falls silent when it would be possible to speak". Nevertheless, reticence could also be used when one falls silent because one could not speak or could not speak anymore (in a satisfactory or conclusive way). Returning, once again, to the example of *The Living Flame of Love*, the decision explicitly punctuated by Saint John of the Cross of suspending the explanation in prose of the poem's final verses allow us to glimpse "the scar left by the words that disappeared". Therefore, the Carmelite mystic creates, through the "active collaboration between silence and word", a "figure of silence", that is, a "significant form", employing Clive Bell's famous expression applied to the work of art¹³.

¹³ The expression "significant form" was employed by the art critic Clive Bell, in *Art* (1914), as a possible response to the book's guiding question: what would be the common quality between the objects capable of causing an aesthetic commotion?

When we analyze the risk of an equivalence between silence and the emptiness of experience, as well as the possible measures at hand, in the sphere of the discursive language itself, to prevent that risk, we come across a fundamental point to our reflection. Silence could be mistaken for nothingness – and, consequently, it could not be appropriate to the ineffable that possibly causes it – since it is amorphous. A *form* requires some combination of elements: words joined in a sentence, sentences connected in a period, syllables composing a verse, notes building a musical theme. As Jankélévitch states, silence integrates discourse and music, but, to be imbued with true *expression*, it might be associated to the words (even if minimally, as recommended by Sister Juana Inés de la Cruz) or to the notes. Thereby it is established a close relation between form and expression, which was already implicit in the term coined by Bell.

That relation, although implied in the quoted passage of *L'Ironie*, is not developed by the French thinker, who, moreover, tries to avoid the application of the concept of form to one of the ways of human expression privileged by his work: music (JANKÉLÉVITCH, 1983, p. 114-118). However, the philosopher Susanne K. Langer, contemporary to Jankélévitch will repeatedly defend, as a reader of Bell, that all *elaborate expression*, gifted with a meaning or a significance, depends on the creation or the apprehension of a *form*.¹⁴ As she declares in *The Practice of Philosophy*, “meaning is *expression*, which depends upon *order*” (LANGER, 1957b, p. 102, my emphasis), that is, of an articulate form, of a “complex combination” (LANGER, 1957a) of elements. Emphasizing, in continuity with the early Wittgenstein, a knowledge that derives from the identification of analogies, the American philosopher sums up in the following way the logical prerequisite of expression¹⁵: “an *expressive form* can express any complex of conceptions that, via some rule of projection, appears congruent with it, that is, appears to be of that *form*” (LANGER, 1957b, p. 21-22, my emphasis). Langer is not indiscriminately referring to any sort of expression, but to the expression that is characteristic to the *symbols*, by which we *conceive* the factual world and the movements of subjective life. In this respect, “all *symbolic expression* involves a *formulation* of what

¹⁴ It is important to emphasize that, according to Langer, in dialogue with Gestalt psychology, the level of experience (especially when provided with a content) – and not only the level of communication (that could not be taken as the symbols’ fundamental function) – could also include some apprehension of the form, otherwise our perception would be reduced to “one great blooming, buzzing confusion”, employing William James’ famous words (apud LANGER, 1957a; 1957b, p. 70). Nevertheless, Langer seems to recognize different levels of the apprehension and composition of forms in human experience, since she admits the presence of particularly elaborate, subtle, and delicate forms in the works of art (LANGER, 1930, p. 101-102).

¹⁵ That same prerequisite is, however, refuted by the other contemporary author included in this article, Vladimir Jankélévitch, regarding both poetic and musical expression (JANKÉLÉVITCH, 1983, p. 64; JANKÉLÉVITCH; BERLOWITZ, 1978, p. 23).

is expressed; that means recognition of *form*” (LANGER, 1957b, p. 68, my emphasis).

Applying these theoretical positions to silence, we confirm that the latter, by itself, does not constitute a complex form. And, as it does not present a combination of elements, our theme has its expressive potential considerably reduced, a point that is observed by Jankélévitch when he opposes mutism to reticence. If the expression that contributes to knowledge, in the Langerian perspective, occurs thanks to the establishment of an analogy between two forms, it would be impossible to conceive certain experience, in its singularity, from an amorphous phenomenon. Silence “provides a favorable condition for concentrated attention” (JANKÉLÉVITCH, 2003, p. 150), is a fecund land for reflection, but we will not be able to “model it” in a form that provides a conception. We could say, in other words, that we conceive *in* silence, but hardly *by* silence. If someone is able to conceive exclusively by (his/her own) silence, that conception would remain extremely restricted to the person who elaborates it and would be doomed to fade very soon.

Since it is not a complex form, silence could not correspond to a “symbolic expression” either, according to Langer’s theory of symbols. That point seems to be implied in Saint Augustine’s considerations on the *jubilus*. We need a way to conceive – even if that conception is a fruit of a knowledge apprehended by the heart! – the jubilant encounter with God, and silence, as it could not be classified as a symbol, is inept for that task.

Nevertheless, could we categorically deny that silence is a method of expression? We cannot. We know that it is capable of assuming different meanings in different contexts: besides the “quietism of non-resistance to evil” (JANKÉLÉVITCH, 1964, p. 88, my translation), we also identify the silences that are characteristic of beatitude, omission or connivance, as the famous saying attests: “silence gives consent”... In any case, silence’s significance is too dependent on the context to be deciphered. Even if the varied symbolic forms (a juridical, literary or poetic text, a myth, a rite or a work of art) demand a contextual background to its interpretation, the dependence seems to amplify considerably for something without form, deprived of elements. Regarding the silent “expression”, the level of ambiguity increases as well, overcoming even the expressive ambiguity of a musical composition, where we are still capable of identifying, according to Jankélévitch, some hints of significances (JANKÉLÉVITCH, 1983, p. 77). Therefore, the interpretation of silence could easily become an empty guessing game that does not fulfill us, as experienced by the character Kattie, and that could, moreover, run the risk of not finding any reference. In short, there are many reasons for supporting the Augustinian position that, in the jubilant approach to God, *we should not fall silent*.

4 Why should one jubilate?

4.1 A response specifically based on Saint Augustine

Considering the points that were collected through this study, we can identify some reasons that would support Saint Augustine's recommendation of the *jubilus* as an adequate expressive response to spiritual uplifting. Firstly, the song that is intoned with joy and intensity corresponds, as we have observed, to the effusion of praise and thanksgiving, described in the Psalms and often experienced in the rites and even in the life of personal faith.

However, the bishop of Hippo especially emphasizes the communal dimension of the *jubilus*¹⁶, following both the context of the two psalms commented on and the identity of the *jubilus* as a musical genre. For example, in Psalm 33 (32), the imperative of singing the praise is directed to a group of just and righteous individuals. Playing to Yahweh their harps and zithers, addressing to Him a new song, the believers, connected to the same pulse and to the same fundamental frequencies, are brought to a mutual harmony that could be hardly obtained by other ways of "expression", among which we could include speech and silence. This kind of musical possibility is largely explored in the religious sphere and in the most different traditions.

Meanwhile, Psalm 100 (99) prescribes that thanksgiving should be practiced by "all the earth". Therefore, in that perspective, *jubilus* is capable of allowing not only the integration between human beings, but between all the creatures that, submitted to the "rhythm of Creation" (MAMMÌ, 2000, p. 356, my translation), take part in the praise to the Creator [a point that reminds us of the *Canticle of the Three Youths* (Dan 3,57-88) and foretells the Franciscan spirituality¹⁷]. We may now better understand the saint's conclusion summed up in the exposition of that same psalm: "If you shout with joy to the Lord, you have understood how all the earth shouts its joy." Maybe, through the verbal register, that connection with nature deprived from words would not be possible.

¹⁶ As we have observed, that communal dimension was already implicit, to some extent, in the necessity of avoiding a silence that could be mistaken for the emptiness of experience.

¹⁷ The praise of God intoned by the multiple creatures also appears in the *Confessions* (VII, 13), in a passage that, despite its reference to the Psalm 144 (143), displays some similarities with the *Canticle of the Three Youths*, regarding the "creatures" that are included in the text. As to the *Canticle* at hand, it is explicitly mentioned in chapter 16 of *On the Nature of Good*, when the bishop of Hippo explains the role of the privations (of certain beauty canons, of light and of sound) in the order of nature: "For if we by restraining the voice fittingly interpose silence in speaking, how much more does He, as the perfect framer of all things, fittingly make privations of all things?" (AUGUSTINE, 2021). Therefore, as Sister Juana Inés de la Cruz and Jankélévitch (section 3), Saint Augustine also recognizes silence's expressive potential, when combined with speech.

It is important to highlight that it has been decided decided, in this article, not to separately examine the reasons for the refusal, by Saint Augustine, of a discursive response to the encounter with the divinity, simply assuming the more obvious limitation of propositional language to articulate some contents that surpass it (in that case, of transcendent nature). Nevertheless, by exploring at this moment the recommendation of the *jubilus*, as indicated by the previous two paragraphs, some comparisons are made not only between music and silence, but also between music and verbal speech, that offer new justifications for a depreciation of the *logos*.

Concerning that second parallel, the act of singing, besides allowing a greater communion between human beings and the other creatures, it offers a special advantage compared to the act of speaking according to the Augustinian thought. As Mammì explains, the song, while withdrawing us from the mundane and utilitarian focus that generally characterizes verbal communication, identifies itself more to the axis of the *pulchrum* (beauty in itself) than to the axis of the *aptum* (useful, convenient)¹⁸. Quoting the scholar's words, "singing means to abandon to one's own vital rhythms, taking them not as instruments for the satisfaction of needs and desires, but as values in themselves, intimate expressions of a universal beauty" (MAMMÌ, 2000, p. 349, my translation).

In this topic dedicated to the exaltation of music to the detriment of silence and of discourse, based on the Augustinian sources, it is important to open a short parenthesis, to stress that the ancient thinker does not always interpret musical practice in a favorable way, especially when the melody, associated with words, could occur in many variations. In conformity with the Church's majoritarian position that, for many centuries, suspected a musical piece that could become independent from the verbal text and so seduce the listener by its mere sensorial appeals¹⁹, the author attests, in the *Confessions* (X, 33: "The Pleasures of the Ear"), that he sins when, in a liturgical composition, he is "more moved by the singing than by the thing that is sung" (AUGUSTINE, 1943, p. 244). If music is still admitted in the religious context, that is due to its didactic function of leading to the sacred text, that is, to its *utility* that stands it apart from *pulchrum* (AUGUSTINE, 1943, p. 243).

The saint's ambivalence regarding music, which can be seen in the opposition between the aforementioned chapter of the *Confessions* and the

¹⁸ Those two concepts integrate the title of Saint Augustine's lost work, *De pulchro et apto*, dedicated to the theme of beauty. That work and the distinction at hand are mentioned by the bishop of Hippo in the *Confessions*, IV, 13, 15.

¹⁹ A proof of that suspicion is the demand, established by the Trent Council (14th century), of conserving in the liturgical singing the text's intelligibility, which was threatened by the melismatic exaggerations: "*in tono intelligibili, intelligibili voce, voce clara, cantu intelligibili*" (POIZAT, apud DOLAR, 2012, p. 184).

reflections on *jubilus* in the *Expositions of the Psalms* may derive from the difference between the open and vague semantical content of musical expression, on one side, and the more defined content of discursive expression, on the other. As Mammì shows us²⁰, the musical inexpressible could be placed, according to some listeners, both “below logos, below reason” (MAMMÌ, 2000, p. 356, my emphasis and translation), similarly to the lascivious sirens’ song (sometimes also described as devoid of words²¹), and above discursive language and the limited human rationality, similarly to the elevated song of *jubilus*. It could be said, making use of the Jankélévitchian terminology, that, from the Augustinian perspective, music, such as night and silence to Christian spirituality, tends either to the *unsayable* (*Confessions*, X, 33), or to the *ineffable* (*Expositions to the Psalms* 32 and 99).

If it just drew near to the unsayable, the song could not be recommended as a response to the Highest Ineffable. It is above all for its positive difference with respect to discursive language, for its excess of signification unfitting to the syllables, in short, for its characteristic ineffability, that singing becomes an alternative when it is not possible to speak nor to be quiet. Therefore, as our present focus is the extreme fecundity of musical experience, we should now close the parenthesis dedicated to the Augustinian ambivalence and return specifically to the positive aspects of music.

Among those aspects, the Exposition to Psalm 99 also seems to imply that the song of *jubilus*, besides offering a response to that experience, could also enhance or extend it. That is what Saint Augustine suggests when, emphasizing the bond between the liturgical musical genre and the harvest song, he affirms, following Mammì’s translation, that the rural workers, “cheerful by the abundance of the crop and joyful by the fecundity and bounty of the earth, sing of happiness; and, among songs that recite words, they insert melodies without words to soar the exulting spirit” (AGOSTINHO DE HIPONA, apud MAMMÌ, 2000, p. 352, my translation and emphasis).

It seems that the *jubilus* comes from a contact with God that, by the development of the song without words, could become even more intimate and intense. In this perspective, the jubilant response to the Ineffable withdraws from the register or the *a posteriori* explanation of mystical experience (as it occurs in the case of *The Living Flame of Love* or of Saint Paul’s testimony, recalled by Sister Juana Inés de la Cruz), because, besides occurring in the *ongoing* experience, it is more than a response since it also *unleashes* an elevation of the spirit.

²⁰ That point is also sustained, with extreme subtlety, by the Slovenian philosopher Mladen Dolar, in the text “The Object Voice” (DOLAR, 2012, p. 167-192).

²¹ That conception of the mermaids’ song is followed by Debussy in “Sirènes”, the third piece of his *Nocturnes* for orchestra (JANKÉLÉVITCH, 2000, p. 85).

After the identification of those aspects solely based on the *Expositions of the Psalms*, it should be checked how the works of two contemporary authors, already mentioned in this article, Susanne K. Langer and Vladimir Jankélévitch, could endorse a tribute to the *jubilus* (although they do not directly examine that musical genre).

4.2 A response based on the dialogue with Susanne K. Langer

Starting from the American philosopher, we observed that her theory of symbols could be used to justify the Augustinian refusal of the silent response, since silence, deprived from parts, does not exactly display a form, does not carry nor convey a conception and, thus, is considerably emptied of expressive potential. Likewise, the recommendation of *jubilus* as a proper response to an ineffable experience could be approved by the author, even if ineffability, following her point of view, is not applied to a non-physical sphere (LANGER, 1957a). According to Langer, music is a complex form, capable of articulating, as the other arts, contents of the “felt life”²², untranslatable by discursive language, making them sonorously conceived through a particular process of abstraction (if compared with the scientific one).²³ As the author sums up in *Philosophy in a New Key*, the work where she outlines her philosophy of art departing from music,

A composer not only indicates, but *articulates* subtle complexes of feeling that language cannot even name, let alone set forth; he knows the forms of emotion and can handle them, “compose” them. We do not “compose” our exclamations and jitters. (LANGER, 1957a, emphasis original)

Therefore, we verify some relevant points in common between Langer’s thought and the Augustinian meditation on the *jubilus*. According to the bishop of Hippo, it would not be possible either to express with words a content from the “felt life”, namely, the deepest joy, capable, however, of being sung with sheer vocalic sounds. Returning to the already quoted words of the saint, the *jubilus* “is a wordless sound of joy; it is the cry of a mind expanded with gladness, *expressing its feelings as best it can* rather than comprehending the sense” (our emphasis), or, at least, rather than comprehending the feelings’ sense through discursive language and reason. That occurs because, as we have also observed, there is another way of understanding, described as “to grasp the fact that what is sung in the heart cannot be articulated in words”.

²² Coined by Henry James, the expression “felt life” is used by the American philosopher in: LANGER, 1957b, p. 48, 60, 67.

²³ Although the alleged vocation, ascribed to music, of expressing ineffable subjective contents already appears in authors from the 19th century, the musical and artistic expression defended by Langer is clearly different from the usual Romantic understanding, since it withdraws from the focus on the artist’s more immediate feeling (namely, as we will observe, from the level of self-expression), to convert itself in an *elaboration* of feeling.

The possibility of an understanding through the *jubilus* admitted by Saint Augustine resembles the Langerian theory of musical and artistic expression. As the philosopher suggests in the aforementioned passage of *Philosophy in a New Key* and restates in several moments of her work, mere self-expression (exclamations and jitters) does not generate a complex form and, consequently, does not offer a conception on its own. We do not cry with the intention that, with the sound of our cry, we could understand our pain, and if someone else can glimpse it in that circumstance, it would not be only by virtue of the cry's quality, but of the whole context where the latter appears. Therefore, silence is probably limited also due to its kinship with self-expressive reactions.

However, as we can infer from the necessity of overflowing attributed to the practice of the *jubilus* (section 3), Saint Augustine allows for an interpretation that takes the genre in question as a more spontaneous and self-expressive singing and as the fruit of an "abandonment" to a higher sphere. Nevertheless, the *jubilus'* alleged spontaneity contrasts with the historical evidence brought by Mammi. According to Hilary of Poitiers, the primitive *jubilus* was not "a spontaneous cry, but a standardized acclamation" (MAMMI, 2000, p. 350, my translation). And, as we have highlighted, that standardization seemed to include "a short refrain in a clear and pronounced beat", sung together. Free exclamations of praise could not be demarcated in such way (rhythmically and melodically) nor concerted in a communitarian song.²⁴ Therefore, although the Langerian distinction between expression and self-expression causes, by itself, doubts, and its application to an author of another time may be problematic, we identify some elements that withdraw the *jubilus* from self-expression. That withdrawal that makes of the song without words, in opposition to sheer silence, a symbolic expression, that is, a formulation that guarantees a conception, also provides the sung response with a significative advantage, absent from the silent one.

If the song of *jubilus composes*, in a form, a musical *gesture* ("a standardized acclamation") the religious exultation, allowing us to conceive it, that significance requires for Langer, as we have seen, a condition of possibility: the presence of certain similarity between the forms of the picture and of the pictured²⁵. It is interesting to observe that, in the passage of the

²⁴ I could not stop myself recalling here another religious practice, more familiar to our reality: the gift of tongues, characterized by an intonation without words or without intelligible words, and ask if that practice comes closer to self-expression or to symbolic expression.

²⁵ That Wittgensteinian prerequisite for figuration seems to hinder the treatment of the divinity, understood as a reality that transcends the forms available to us. However, we observe that even the apophatic discourse searches, in some cases, for a correspondence between the (divine) "picture" and the pictured, appealing, in order to suggest what surpasses any possible image, to "images" that are able to defy visuality, as the "non-image" of darkness, frequent in Christian mysticism. Therefore, at some extent, a "form" is sought to obtain an approximate conception (that is, a certain "form") to what is beyond every form. The reports of mystical experiences usually have to face that constitutive paradox.

Exposition of Psalm 32 transcribed in the second section, Saint Augustine establishes a correspondence between the song *without words* and the *superlinguistic* experience or reality expressed by that song. According to the saint, it is worth repeating: "Jubilation is a shout of joy; it indicates that the heart is bringing forth what defies speech. To whom, then, is this jubilation more fittingly offered than to God who surpasses all utterance?"

To sum up, in our line of thought influenced by Langer, the song without words is articulated in a form (something that could not be applied to isolated silence, although the latter is also deprived from words); and that form is elaborated through a symbolic resource (music) that can be organized without the collaboration of verbal discourse, establishing, thus, an analogy between forms (the form of the song and the form of the conception of the divinity or of the mystic delight), which enables the Ineffable's symbolic expression.

Curiously, that "window" opened by music to the expression of something that could not be discursively said is a point that draws Saint Augustine near Langer, while it withdraws both of them from Wittgenstein. As Adrienne Dengerink Chaplin explains, "*pace* Wittgenstein Langer did not believe that one had to remain silent about what one could not speak in scientific terms. She did not share Wittgenstein's defeatist conclusion" (CHAPLIN, 2020). And this specialist on the American philosopher concludes:

Langer's solution to Wittgenstein's problem was not to stay silent but to extend the repertoire of symbolic forms beyond discursive linguistic expressions to include *non-verbal*, *non-linguistic* and *non-discursive* forms of expression. This enabled the articulation of experiences from realms other than the physical world, such as expressed in myth, art and ritual. (CHAPLIN, 2020, emphasis original)

Bearing in mind the due differences between Langer and Saint Augustine²⁶, Chaplin's words could refer, to some extent, to the solution, given by the Father of the Church, in his *Expositions to the Psalms*, to the problem of ineffability.

4.3 A response based on the dialogue with Vladimir Jankélévitch

Saint Augustine's prescription could also be supported by at least two justifications extracted from Vladimir Jankélévitch's thought. Firstly, although he does not link in a categorical way the expression of a musical work to a content of extramusical origin (for example, the life of "feeling"), as Langer does, Jankélévitch directly associates music to the register and to the regime of the ineffable. The semantic indetermination of a musical composition indicates an extreme fecundity, that places it *beyond* and not *below* the limited verbal

²⁶ Among those differences, we may quote: the historical separation between both authors, the different ontological orders to which the ineffable realities privileged by their thoughts belong (the immanent ineffable by Langer and the transcendent one by the bishop of Hippo), the peculiarities of the conceptual tools that were respectively available to them, besides the emphasis given by each one of them to the non-discursive symbolic forms.

expression of univocal pretension. The French philosopher, in his aesthetics, applies to the immanent sphere of the musical phenomenon strategies and concepts imported from mystical theology. Therefore, not only the “dazzling obscurity of the secret Silence” contemplated by Dionysius the Areopagite (2004, p. 191) but also music seems to appear to “our glimpse as a kind of penumbra where uncountable figures about to be born are unveiled in a nebulous way” (JANKÉLÉVITCH, 1966, p. 75, my translation). Innumerable possibilities are opened from the nothingness that exceeds the capacity of human representation. As he sums up, “music means nothing and yet means everything” (JANKÉLÉVITCH, 2003, p. 11). Therefore, it is possible to infer that an ineffable method of expression as music (and, according to Jankélévitch, ineffability is a feature of all music and not exclusively of the song without words) could provide, according not only to the Christian theologian but also to this agnostic French philosopher, a particularly appropriate response to an equally ineffable experience.

Secondly, we find, in Jankélévitch, a curious and counterintuitive correspondence that may justify the Augustinian recommendation of the *jubilus* (if transposed to Jankélévitchian thought and, to some extent, when examined in the specific context of the *Expositions of the Psalms*). According to the French philosopher,

Actually, music is already a sort of silence, since it imposes silence to the noises, starting with the unbearable noise par excellence, that is, the one of words. The noblest of all noises, the word – since it is the one that enable the understanding between men – become, when they compete with music, the most indiscreet and impertinent one. Music is the silence of words, as poetry is the silence of prose: it relieves the oppressing load of *logos* and prevents men from identifying themselves exclusively with the act of speaking. (JANKÉLÉVITCH; BERLOWITZ, 1978, p. 191, my translation)

On one hand, besides dwelling the interior of a musical composition in the presence of pauses and rests, silence is both the source and the mouth of every music. On the other hand, as indicated by the passage above, silence may be identified, to some extent, with music itself, when, by the term under discussion, we understand, above all, the cessation of human speech. That cessation may be seen as extremely beneficial, since, as we have mentioned before, word (in the discursive use) is, according to the philosopher’s perspective, limited and, besides that, devoid of subtlety, reductive in the generalizations produced by its concepts, “facile and voluble” (JANKÉLÉVITCH, 2003, p. 140), strongly prone to become verbosity. As it mutes “the unbearable noise par excellence”, music could be understood not only as “a sort of silence” and a silence of the words”, but also as a “relative silence” (JANKÉLÉVITCH, 2003, p. 139), a “melodious silence” (JANKÉLÉVITCH, 2003, p. 140) and an “audible silence” (JANKÉLÉVITCH, 2003, p. 151). According to the French thinker, the relationship between silence and the musical phenomenon is so intimate that one may be pre-

sented as the condition of possibility of the other. As “one needs silence in order to hear music” (JANKÉLÉVITCH, 2003, p. 140), “one must make music to obtain silence” (JANKÉLÉVITCH, 2003, p. 139).

The convergence between music and silence seems, at first sight, to make the chanted response of the *jubilus* quite similar to the silent response prescribed by the *Tractatus*. As Jankélévitch defends: “Singing exempts from saying. Singing is a way of being quiet!” (JANKÉLÉVITCH, 1983, p. 173, my translation). Therefore, by a sort of poetic syllogism, we could reach the solution presented by the bishop of Hippo to the problem of ineffability. If we use as our major premise Wittgenstein’s famous aphorism, “Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent”, and, as our minor premise, the Jankélévitchian exclamation “Singing is a way of being quiet!”, we will obtain the Augustinian conclusion, restated in the following terms: “Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one could sing”.

If we consider the premise “singing is a way of being quiet” apart from our syllogism, that is, in the very context of the Exposition of Psalm 32, it is clear that Saint Augustine would not agree with it, since “a sort of silence” would not be an appropriate response in the described situation, due to the reasons already presented. Nevertheless, the Jankélévitchian position converges with the Augustinian one insofar as, for the French philosopher, singing comes close to being quiet because, as we emphasized, it escapes from the discursive logic and manifests itself as a *relative* silence. Thanks to that relativity, the “melodious silence”, that is also a “melodious, measured noise, enchanted noise” (JANKÉLÉVITCH, 2003, p. 140), cannot be mistaken for a total *absence*, but it presents itself as an *expressive* figure, a point that was observed by Jankélévitch in *L’Ironie* and was especially developed by Langer’s work, as already shown.

The difference between an alleged “absolute” silence and music is also implicit in Jankélévitch’s statement previously quoted that the latter “relieves the oppressing load of logos and prevents men from identifying themselves exclusively with the act of speaking”. We observe in these words an anthropological concern, which is expressed in the recognition of the human being’s constitutive faculties. It is usually considered, as one of our specific features, the mastery of verbal language, a skill directly identified with our rationality. According to some authors, human reason is even limited to the exercise of discursive reason, capable of being projected in the form of propositions. However, Jankélévitch defends that the human being (and the human world) cannot be reduced to contents discursively translatable, a position that reminds us of Ernst Cassirer and his follower Susanne K. Langer, for whom the symbolic forms are not the only ones that compose our humanity. Among those non-discursive “forms”, music has a leading role in Jankélévitchian philosophy. Therefore, if we admit that human beings identify themselves with language and music (finding in them their specific-

ity), both resources should be exclusive to our species.²⁷ On one hand, sheer silence “relieves the oppressing load of logos”, but it does not define us as humans. Understood as a simple acoustic occurrence, that is, as a sonorous absence, mutism is also verified in other living creatures, although, in the human being, it gains distinctive marks, since it appears as a possibility established in counterpoint with our specific linguistic capacity. Therefore, in order to define us as humans, silence needs to be considered in its relative constitution, supposing a relation (even if interiorly experienced) with the words or, in the musical context, combining with notes and revealing itself in non-verbal sonorities within a complex construction.

Therefore, if Jankélévitch, in tune with Saint Augustine, recommends us to sing when it is not appropriate to speak, stating that, “where speech fails, music begins; when words are arrested, one has no choice but to sing” (JANKÉLÉVITCH, 2003, p. 72), that occurs because the human being is the one who can sing in place of speaking, who can come close to silence without being completely quiet thanks to the possibility of elaborating a work in a non-verbal register.

Conclusion

Our reflection was motivated by the instigating prescription, formulated by Saint Augustine in his *Expositions to the Psalms 32 and 99*, that the believer or the community, when or after experiencing an intimate contact with God, could not speak nor fall silent. Displaying an evident contrast with the early Wittgenstein’s well-known aphorism and with the frequent praise of silence, identified both in Neoplatonism and in Christian mysticism, as a high spiritual attitude, the rejection of a silent response required to be examined as well as its possible justifications. Thereafter, we equally investigated the reasons pro the recommendation of a musical response, intoned by the song without words of the *jubilus*. For this purpose, we invoked not only the Augustinian sources, but contemporary philosophers (especially Susanne K. Langer and Vladimir Jankélévitch) who, through different paths, seem to support the saint’s prescription.

Concerning the reasons for a refusal of a silent response, which also enabled us to notice some drawbacks of mutism outside the spiritual sphere, the following were identified: the fact that Saint Augustine does not consider

²⁷ Although that assumption is quite a controversial theme, Jankélévitch emphasizes the belonging of music to human experience not only in the quoted passage, but also on the last page of *Music and the ineffable* (JANKÉLÉVITCH, 1983, p. 190). Regarding Langer, she defends, in a more explicit way, the mistake of attributing a capacity of artistic creation and/or appreciation to non-human animals (LANGER, 1970, p. 142), be it because their merely self-expressive acts could not configure a work of art, be it because they would be deprived from the capacity of symbolic elaboration.

verbal discourse as the only method of communication and explanation of the ineffable feeling of jubilation, employing the discourse to refer to another expressive means (music); the influence of the biblical context of the two psalms commented by the bishop of Hippo, which emphasize an external sort of praise, incompatible with silence's typical introspection; mutism could be "read" (by the neighbor or especially by God) as a sign of ingratitude if practiced by a favored person; the intensity of the spiritual experience, related to divine overabundance, seems to demand an overflowing; the risk that the silent attitude could be mistaken for the emptiness of experience; besides the reduced expressive potential of silence, since it is not provided with a complex form, contributing to its ambiguity and unconvincing character. Some possible strategies have also been recognized, in this article, to fill silence with meaning, especially when the total absence of words seems to contrast with the richness of the ineffable experience. Through those strategies, which include the conjugation between silence and word, we confirm the former's amorphous nature and the necessity of creating with it a *form* in order to turn it truly *expressive*.

Concerning the reasons for the recommendation of the *jubilus* offered by the *Expositions of the Psalms*, it was identified that: the effusive character of the song corresponds to the intensity of spiritual joy and responds to the aforementioned requirement of overflowing; more than silence and speech, singing allows for a praise practiced in a communal and even cosmic way, since we find out, through music, the "rhythm of Creation" that we share with every living creature; while singing, we withdraw from an utilitarian relationship with the world, predominant in the use of verbal language, and by that movement we approach the beauty in itself (*pulchrum*); music, especially the song without words, in Saint Augustine's conception, may be located, due to its difference from discursive language, in the superrational level and consequently comes close to the register of the ineffable; and, finally, the believer or the community is capable of enhancing or extending the spiritual experience through the practice of singing. It is important to clarify, in this conclusion, that not all the reasons listed in the topic 4.1 are a prerogative of music or of the "song" without words. On one hand, the more effusive character of the song in agreement with the act of praise and with the emotional overflowing as well as the suitability of musical practice to communal experience do not seem to be shared by silence. On the other hand, not only music, but also silence, could stimulate the connection with internal rhythms, a less utilitarian relationship with the world and the elevation of the spirit, besides suggesting, as a "silence that is tacit", the savoring of a superlinguistic and superrational reality.

Examining the possible reasons for the recommendation of the *jubilus* as an adequate response to an ineffable experience from the point of view of Contemporary authors, the following conclusions were drawn. According to Langer's thought, music is equipped with a complex form, therefore, it

organizes and conveys a conception, that is, it presents itself as a *symbolic* expression. As observed, those properties are not applicable to silence, that shares, in certain points, the same limitations typical of the self-expressive reactions. The symbolic expression of music deals with the elaboration of contents from the life of “feelings”, untranslatable by the discursive way, presenting them, thanks to analogies between the forms of the picture and of the pictured, to our knowledge, through a particular process, different from the theoretical one. Those points could certainly contribute to the endorsement of the examined recommendation. As it is not a complex articulation, silence fails to express spiritual plenitude. On the contrary, *jubilus* offers a form to the expression of a feeling that is discursively inexpressible, due to the similarity between its non-verbal constitution and the referred ineffable sentiment, that becomes known by the “heart” of the one who sings it. It may be concluded, from Langer’s perspective, that the musical genre in question, differently from silence, presented, to the one who practiced or observed it, the ineffable quality of a communal religious experience, from which just some precarious vestiges are left thanks to some witnesses of that time, such as Saint Augustine himself.

Finally, focusing on Jankélévitch’s thought, it was firstly observed that the ineffability attributed by him to musical expressivity could make of music a particularly appropriate response to the ineffable nature of the experienced spiritual jubilation. Besides that, the correspondence established between music and silence allows that the former, understood as a “relative silence”, emerges as a specifically human alternative to the abdication of the limited word without running the risk of plunging into the emptiness of expression, in which the ineffable fecundity may be easily confounded with the almost unsayable sterility.

As a conclusion of this article, it may do well to recall here Aldous Huxley, for whom, “after silence that which comes nearest to expressing the inexpressible is music” (HUXLEY, 1931, p. 17). According to our conclusions, in tune with the Augustinian prescription, that affirmation seems to us mistaken. Without daring to say that there is a method of human expression especially capable of dealing with the ineffable, we have enough elements to sustain that music makes possible a more thorough treatment of the positive inexpressible than silence, whose expressive capacity is, as we have seen, somewhat questionable.

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Clovis Salgado Gontijo has a PhD in Philosophy, with an emphasis on Aesthetics and Art Theory (Facultad de Artes, Universidad de Chile, 2014). He is currently a researcher and a permanent professor of the Postgraduate Program of Philosophy of the Faculdade Jesuíta de Filosofia e Teologia (FAJE), where he leads the interdisciplinary research group "Mysticism and Aesthetics", registered by the Brazilian governmental agency CNPq. Orcid.org/ 0000-0002-8176-5990. E-mail: clovisalgon@gmail.com

Address: Av. Dr. Cristiano Guimarães, 2127 – Planalto
31720-300 – Belo Horizonte – MG