

## **“I Sing the Body Electric”**

### **Body, Voice, Technology and Religion**

In the May 2016 issue of JRFM, the relationship between body, voice, technology, and religion is discussed from an interdisciplinary perspective using approaches from musicology, philosophy, and religious studies.

The body and being embodied are fundamental modes of our existence. We rely on body to interact with each other and our environment through corporal language or sensations. As bodies, we often communicate with our voice. Voice extends the body, it also represents a human being outside of his/her body, for example by being recorded on a storage device. As embodied beings, we use technology to extend the reach of our voice beyond time and space. The technological extension of the voice can therefore be seen as an extension of body. Technology separates the voice from bodily organs and in doing so, it replaces the body, it takes the body's place. This separation raises anthropological questions: Which anthropological ideas are formed by such a separation of body and voice? Is a voice without a human body still part of a person? And how does it influence anthropological concepts if the original producer of the voice is technology itself rather than a human body?

In religious contexts, this interrelation between body, voice, anthropological questions, and technology is crucial. Religion is intertwined with technologies and techniques of body and voice. Visions of divine entities are often characterized using technologies that (re)produce voices and sounds. For example in Christianity, the voice of the Old Testament God is thought of as trembling like thunder. Or, Jesus, the Word of God, becomes, according to the gospel of John, body and has performative qualities: through the Word all things were made. Also the interaction between humans and transcendental realms can be expressed by means of techniques and metaphors of sound and voice. “To sing is to pray twice” is an old saying suggesting that singing expresses bodily joy or sorrow. Religious practices and spiritual feelings often resonate with and emerge out of bodily sensations and experiences.

This issue of JRFM deals with the interrelation between body, voice, technology, and religion with selected articles from different disciplines. Particularly, it focuses on the anthropological dimensions of this interaction, by considering the role of technology in producing and reproducing voices. Contributions from philosophy and musicology are combined with religious studies perspectives.

