

# Noise: production, consumption, and value continuum

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The two following stories are connected through the lens of mind exploration.

The more recent one is about Dr. John Francis – often called by the title “Planet Walker” due to his journeys on foot for 22 years. But he has an even more special feat: choosing to communicate with “silence” for 17 years long.

[ABC News reported](#) that the first time he spoke again after 17 years, the man did not recognize his own voice. He looked around to find who was speaking and, in a peculiar way, thought that “there’s someone behind me saying what I’m thinking”.

And then, he realized that he was the one speaking and started laughing at this discovery [1].

In the case of John Francis, it all started with the following problem. As an environmentalist, he tried to urge people to act when he witnessed the San Francisco Bay environmental disaster in 1971. But words alone were not effective. His walking for environmental purposes led to controversy, skepticism, quarrels, etc., which were also ineffective. And then, it was a moment of serendipity [2] when John decided to try “a day of silence” – or in his own words: “I’m just going to shut up for the day” [1]. Unbeknownst to him, the decision to try it for one day led to a complete change in the perception of the value of silence – that is, to stop making noise. That one-day

experiment turned into the next 17 years of silence.

This is a great example of finding the value of silence after deciding for yourself to stop the “noise production”.

Now let’s talk about another interesting story – a conversation between brilliant minds.

The person who told me a few years ago was an “authoritative source” – [Professor Ngo Bao Chau](#) [3], who was one of the two people in the mentioned conversation. Prof. Chau has an uncle who made great contributions to Vietnamese mathematics since the early days of the nation’s science development: [Prof. Ngo Thuc Lanh](#) (1923–2019). Some brief general information about him can be found here [4].

One day, Prof. Ngo Bao Chau returned to work in Vietnam and came to visit his uncle, who was quite old at the time. He was severely deaf. In today’s world, the use of hearing aids is no longer a strange thing, and the cost is no longer an issue. However, it seems that Prof. Ngo Thuc Lanh did not want to use it.

After talking for a while, what left a deep impression on Prof. Chau was that his uncle opened his eyes to a whole new realm of value. It was very different than how people usually try to convince others. Prof. Lanh had that kind of persuasion with just one sentence:

“... Being deaf is truly a blessing, my dear Chau!”

This is the joyful cheer of a person being freed from the chains of the compulsion to “consume” artificial noise.

This shift in value, through the lens of the dynamic system of the mindsponge theory [5] after many years of development and application in research and publication, can now be explained clearly, using both logical reasoning and analytics [6]. A binary value, 0 or 1, is favorable for usual perceptions (such as true or false, good or evil, etc.). However, cultural values do not change like that. Rather, each is a continuum. The rate at which the potentiometer turns to create changes depends on factors such as knowledge background, impactful events, serendipity moments, and the proactive

manner of conducting feedback-seeking experiments.



**Figure:** “Je pense voter pour le loup ça fera réfléchir le berger”. (Source: unknown)

Nonetheless, social phenomena with certain depths in terms of their cultural value, when viewed through the lens of the mindsponge theory, become very interesting and often contain many underlying educational implications.

## References

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[6] Vuong QH, Nguyen MH, La VP. (2022). *The mindsponge and BMF analytics for innovative thinking in social sciences and humanities*. Berlin, Germany: De Gruyter.



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