

## Bodies, silences, and disciplines: on the ways to confine and their possible educations<sup>1 2 3 4</sup>

### *Corpos, silêncios e disciplinas: sobre modos de confinamento e suas educações possíveis*

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#### Abstract

The text analyzes the issue of silence in a contemporary context, thinking from its double Latin meaning: that of taceo, as silencing; and that of sileo, as a silence that expands subjective spaces of creation, suspending previous significant codifications. The analysis goes through the relationships between ways of silence and discipline (of oneself or the other) and their reverberations in the bodies, based on the thoughts of Michel Foucault and José Gil. The reflection culminates thinking about the silence that sometimes operates as moralizing pedagogy, other times as a pedagogical act that opens space for new modes of existence.

**Keywords:** silence, silence and discipline, body and education, silence pedagogies

#### Resumo

O texto analisa a questão do silêncio sob uma ambiência contemporânea, pensando-o a partir de sua dupla acepção latina: a de taceo, associada ao silenciamento; e a de sileo, silêncio que amplia espaços subjetivos de criação pela suspensão de codificações significativas previamente existentes. A análise percorre então, sobretudo a partir do pensamento de Michel Foucault e de José Gil, as relações entre modos de silenciar e de disciplinar(-se) e suas reverberações nos corpos, culminando no olhar sobre o silêncio que ora opera como pedagogia moralizante, ora como ato pedagógico que abre espaço para novos modos de existência.

**Palavras-chave:** silêncio, silêncio e disciplina, corpo e educação, pedagogias do silêncio

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## I

The body shoved, gagged, and blindfolded in a cell. The cell opens, the other ends and grabs his neck. The gasoline on the bucket, the plastic bag that asphyxiates the body. The gasoline on the body. The frightened body, the neck crushed under a truncheon. The body isolated, and the difficulty to breathe. Cough. Cough. The blurred vision through the bag. The rotten clothes on the body. The obligation to stand up, against the wall, not touching it. The wish to exhaust the body, to erase it in its silence. (Brechtner, 2018).

## II

The body that walks on the grass. The sound of the woods amplified with the birds, the body that wanders amidst the leaves. The eyes that observe the vast field. To sit down and contemplate: the hands that rub each other and, then, go to the face, dumbfounded. The look seems focused on something far away. Run in the field. Lay on the field. The hand strokes some land between the fingers; the face is delighted in the same land. And smiles. And so the easel is open, the painting can begin. In everything, the silence (Schnabel, 2019).

Two ways of corporeity<sup>5</sup>, two ways of inhabiting silence. This text is about this: the ways of silencing. We lean over some gestures of silence and silencing – based on contemporary writings and policies – that are forged in the relation between language and alterity and that, when doing so, also define and question both. The essay assembles a series of works that continuously question what the pandemic of Sars-Cov-2, despite its regrettable destructive power, ends up highlighting about ourselves. What is generally at stake here is the production

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<sup>5</sup> The notion of corporeity directly refers to the understanding of the by as process. Despite all tensions connected to the concept– which we will not deal here –, it is worth highlighting that its use points out to the understanding that the dimension “unstable, heterogeneous, and multiple” is the first corporeal condition itself (Le Moal, 2008, p. 717). Therefore, when talking about corporeity, we are affirming this understanding of the body, always as a product of a creation that takes place in the discourses and the affective circulations; so in the ambivalence of the interconnections between historicity and meetings. Valuable to this procedural understanding are, among other, many reflections proposed by Michel Foucault and José Gil, which we will briefly present in this work. For other approximations on the production of corporeities grounded on these authors, see Bocchetti (2017, 2019). The terms “body” and “corporeity” are interchangeable in these pages, we understand that both can be used with such denotation.

of silenced bodies, held in silence through policies of very different natures, that can be enacted in isolation situations such as we are living, but not only in those moments.

Maybe we can say that the pandemic underway has created certain “emerging corporeities”; something close to what the biological knowledge have called “emerging properties” (Morgan, 1923, p. 03): what emerges, unpredictable *a priori*, when associating two or more beings, with a characteristic that belongs to none of them in isolation. Similarly, in the connection between the pandemic and our existences, we have seen emerging novelties on the ways to produce corporeity, improbable to exist outside this time and mostly unknown until the worldwide viral infestation brought them to light.

Among other things, the pandemic has thrown many bodies into silence. And silence carries the ambiguity of its own presence; it explains while silencing. By not saying, it explains itself (Orlandi, 2007, p. 56). In this text, we think about it, mainly, from its corporal base, that is, the interface between the ways of silencing and the regimes that produce bodies. We understand, from authors such as Michel Foucault and José Gil, that human corporeities are forged in the connection of those historical forces and the affective movements to establish oneself when facing the world. We consider silence as one of the key elements in these ways we establish ourselves.

Latin has two terms to refer to silencing. One is *taceo*, a silence derived from silencing yourself, the speech that is constrained by someone to finish – something close to what we might call “silencing”; the other is *sileo*, which refers to a lack of language, an external calmness, but not apart from the processes of meaning (Matos, 2018). *Taceo* and *sileo* are considered here, together with the processes to produce corporeities that established them or that are established by them. Therefore, silence is taken in these reflections within its political movements, if we can think political, as did Gilles Deleuze, as the “active experimentation” done by the forces that make ourselves– producers of identities, sensations, affections, etc. – work in a certain way (Deleuze & Parnet, 1998, p. 159).

Different ways to invest on subjectivities are integrated to the forms of political incidence of silence, many of them connected to the preparation of bodies and their dispositions to act in the world. In this sense, there are fundamental relations between the *ways of silencing* and the *ways of self-disciplining*. Also because discipline, in the different senses we seek here, enacts exactly as the reiterations of the body silence of the bodies. TO analyze the relation between

silence and the production of corporeity passes by a perspective that, at least since the thoughts of Michel Foucault in *Discipline & Punish* (Foucault, 1987) – but not only, as we will see–, calls us to deal with the issue of discipline and its possible tensions.

## The *taceo* and the disciplines of silencing

There is the silencing that asphyxiated George Floyd<sup>6</sup> and many others before him, thousands of people persecuted by dictatorial regimes, millions of Jewish people faced by Nazism, and the contemporary practices of torture, among others. The silence of *taceo* is the silence from the act of silencing yourself or its attempt (Matos, 2018). It is related to the different policies, of different levels of fatality, that hinders speaking and that, in this sense, can choke, censor, and silence by coercion. Its more recent proliferation seems mainly materialized by a series of suffocating policies that operate between throat choking and uncontrollable viral deaths. We seem to be amidst a set of ways to govern that find in the obstruction of air to our lungs, a type of physiological-political base of working.

Certainly, these more lethal ways of silencing are not a novelty in themselves– Mbembe (2018), for example, narrates them from an “industrialization of death” (p. 21), key to the process of colonization. They emerge from a necro-biopolitics that continues to work, until today, by the different distribution of the ways to live and die (Bento, 2018). The most lethal facet of *taceo* is, before all, centered in the organic matrix of bodies, as the year of 2020 reminded us: the body that dies under the knee of policeman-strangler; the bodies that pile up, also asphyxiated, on carts and thumbs, witnesses of a social erasing, that can be only partially explained by the a tiny virus. We recognize the ways of governing here, fed sometimes by a presidential “*So what?*”<sup>7</sup> – that, in the early opening of still infected cities, proliferates itself in the cities and states–, or times by police actions that reap lives by equally scandalous methods.

<sup>6</sup> Back man, asphyxiated by a white police officer in broad day light in Minneapolis, United States, on May 2020, whose death reverberated internationally in movements to defend black lives (#vidasnegrasimportam, #blacklivesmatter)

<sup>7</sup> We refer here to the phrase of president Jair Messias Bolsonaro. When asked by a reporter, in April 2020, about the fact that the number of Covid deaths in Brazil had surpassed those in China, the president answered “So what? I’m sorry. What do you want me to do? I am Messias [his middle name], but I can’t do miracles” (Garcia et al., 2020)

Besides this planned mechanic of silencing through a political suffocation, operates another, which equally affects the suffocated bodies, killing them or aligning them, as survivors, strengthening its action lines. These other policies imprint words on the bodies, read not only in their organicity but also their intensiveness, populating them with metaphors and adjectives able to destroy its materiality and social viability. Or to recover it when convenient: that is what the mayor of Rio de Janeiro did when changing the criteria to define the deaths by Covid-19 and, thus, to provide, more palatable numbers of deaths by the disease in his government and an absurd transcendental liberation of those bodies, who statistically escapes from a virus after being killed by it (G1 Rio, 2020).

Obviously, not all processes of suffocation by the semantic attribution of bodies are so simplistic, and many work through a more complex microphysics that also acts beyond State institutions. Useful in the creative production of statistics from our rulers, the adjectivization of these bodies also suffocates the everyday life of social relations in isolation. In these confined times, there is a whole figuration of the viral body—corporeities founded by the regimes of truth produced in the pandemic—which influences the relations and meetings more or less virtualized we live, enacting different silences. There is, for example, the figure of the sick body that screams creating distances even inside the home and targeted by certain ways of social visibility. Thus, receiving a diagnosis of Covid-19 can immediately imprint a relation with oneself, commonly marked by the risk that impregnates existence with fear, or a relation with others that can reverberate, even in the, until then, protected medical act. The venting of the director of a private hospital expressed in a journalistic article amidst the demands to use hydroxychloroquine is striking: “We are in the time of BBB<sup>8</sup> medicine, enacted by voting. You can no longer not prescribe hydroxychloroquine for a mildly serious patient. The family pressures you and, if you don’t, in the following day, you are no longer their doctor” (Collucci, 2020). There are also cured bodies, to be used once more in statistics that enable hasty cancellations of quarantine. And bodies in herds, objectifiable in favor of percentage calculations that sideline individual suffering, converted into necessary means for collective immunization. All silenced through suffocating uses of these corporeities under construction; suffocating because they effectively

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<sup>8</sup> Translation note: A reference to the international reality show Big Brother in which the participants are isolated from the world and constantly being recorded. Every week the audience votes to eliminate one participant from the game show. In Brazil, the program is known as BBB or ‘Big Brother Brasil’.

remove the air, by asphyxia, anxiety, or stupefaction faced by what we have become and what a nanometric infestation was capable to so clearly show.

Contemporary silences tell us about all these bodies. But there would be evidently a genealogy of *taceo*, much more complex to reconstruct, that passes by its more lethal forms, but equally by milder ways to manage silence. Foucault already reminded us, for example, on the importance of silencing through the attribution of dementia in the establishment of psychiatric language (Foucault, 1993); or the penitent silence on the Christian way to guide behaviors (Foucault, 2014).

Very diverse institutional operations refer to the silenced bodies. Foucault called discipline this particularly institutionalized force to make one silent. Its most famous image in the thought of the French philosopher is, without a doubt, taming, as narrated in *Discipline & Punish* (Foucault, 1987). On it, Foucault leans on the discipline materialized in the conversion of the body into an “useful body” (p. 118). It is in the context of this transformation that a set of characteristics of discipline society is used. They have in common a central machinery of working, involving ways to scrutinize spatial and time relationships to which our bodies are submitted when inserted on them. The body, thus, is forged in a deeply individualized way in spaces such as school, the army, psychiatric hospitals, prison, hospital, etc. Consider, for example, the army. Foucault (1987), reproducing a military ordinance of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, reminds that the recruits were accustomed to

holding their heads high and erect; to standing upright, without bending the back, to sticking out the belly, throwing out the chest and throwing back the shoulders; and, to help them acquire the habit, they are given this position while standing against a wall in such a way that the heels, the thighs, the waist and the shoulders touch it, as also do the backs of the hands, as one turns the arms outwards, without moving them away from the body. . . Likewise, they will be taught never to fix their eyes on the ground, but to look straight at those they pass . . . to remain motionless until the order is given, without moving the head, the hands or the feet . . . lastly to march with a bold step, with knee and ham taut, on the points of the feet, which should face outward. (Foucault, 1987, p. 117)

This military narrative of the disciplined body was followed by well-recognized studies that, inspired by Foucauldian ideas, could find important reverberations of the disciplinary producing on the foundation of school institution and the pedagogies that shaped it (Dussel & Caruso, 2003; Narodovsky, 2001). If we take the issue of discipline by the silencing of the body provoked by it, we will also see the complexity inherent to the production of corporeities faced

by the institutional attempt to make silence. Before the disciplining emerges a whole silent complexification, that sometimes gives space to taming, but that, also and very frequently, establishes a “powerful and transformative space”, as argued by Stephanie Power-Carter (2020, p. 107), in which non-verbal communication emerges with special acuteness. Studying the attempts to silence black girls amidst educational relationships, the author sees herself facing what she understands as a trilogy of ways to silence. She narrates then a silencing connected to the actions able to reproduce images and identity stereotypes connected to Black American women. A silence seen as “submission to hegemonic processes and acceptance of negative images and stereotypes” produced (p. 117); but also a silence associated to the production of spaces of mutual support, as answers to the ways of silencing, visible, for example, in the communication, through minimal gestures as gazes and winks (Power-Carter, 2020). They create them, faced by the attempts of disciplinary attempts of silencing, other silent infinities:

If silence is noticed by the abstention of words or the lack of sound, for several times the “non-tellable” changes itself in other modalities: a breakdown in tears, a nervous laughter, a disconnected sentence, or the deliberate refusal to express oneself. It can be a pause, a sigh, a deep or puffy breath. Sometimes, a lost or detoured gaze, a closing of eyelids. Understood in its productive character, therefore, the act of silencing communicates what is hidden, what one avoids doing, what is not seen, not spoken, not heard, and cannot be filled, besides mutually shaping what is verbalized (Nadai et al., 2019, p. 844)

Thought as an anatomical-political calling to repetition, discipline, in its game with the ways of silencing the bodies, can maybe bring elements of analysis that differ from those that consider disciplining only through its taming reverberations. We consider once more Foucauldian writings, now produced for the classes of a course given by the historian in his final years called *On the Government of the Living* (Foucault, 2014). On the studies of the practices of self in Greek culture and the first centuries of Christianity, he narrates the procedures to enter the devoted life in the first centuries of the Church. Foucault (2014) refers then to a key dispositive that emerges among the Greeks and that was present in the emerging Christianity: “spiritual direction (*direction de conscience*)” (p. 208). Through which someone decides – freely, it is important to say – that someone else should tell them what to want; guides, therefore, their will. Within this direction dispositive resides another, particularly valuable to think a bit more about discipline and its ways of silence, that is the “examination of conscience” (p. 214). In Christianity, this type of examination is known and continues, somewhat until now, in the practice of confession. It is based, on one hand, on the idea that we need to be guided

throughout life by someone; that, for that, we need to be obedient – what, in Christian discourse, is related to the submission to another and with humbleness–; and, finally, that we should recognize our flaws faced by Christian morality, what means analyzing our acts and thoughts from their capacity to makes us feel embarrassed or not, exposing all this so that we can be delivered from all evil. The Christian examination of consciousness is, therefore, an effective operation on oneself, in which it is added codes of morality, forms of conduction, culpability, shame, and correction (Foucault, 2014).

It is curious to resume the issue of Christian examination of consciousness from the notion of discipline and silencing. The scrutiny of oneself embedded in the penitent’s action is particularly effective in the moment that, similarly to the disciplinary mechanisms, it “becomes a sort of recurrent and repeated behavior that has to be deployed, prompted, encouraged whenever one has sinned” (Foucault, 2014, p. 205). Mainly in the monastic life such personal manifestation of truth points out to “a strongly continuous structure in monastic life and monastic ascesis, since it involves the subject advancing every day, every moment, and every instant towards a continuously greater perfection” (p. 206).

Beside this reiterated exercise of vigilance of behavior, the Christian examination of consciousness and discipline seem to also get closer to the type of individualization that they seek to promote: both intend to shape the individual, from the details involved in behavior, though in different ways. While the disciplinary operation focuses mainly on the gestural scrutiny of the body– Foucault (1987) will always reminds us that “discipline is a political anatomy of detail.” (p. 120), –Christian examination finds in the detailing of thoughts its core activity. The Christian from the first centuries enacts on him/herself a continuous exercise of exegesis of his/her own thought, which is “obviously the central problem of the monk’s life” (Foucault, 2014, p. 270). Such attention on oneself is based on the “thought that comes to the mind along with all the uncertainties of its origin, nature, and content, and consequently of what one can extract from it.” (p. 271).

If discipline is the anatomic intervention by the detail, the Christian examination of consciousness can be perceived as a reflection, equally detailed, on the behavior, another type of discipline. And though it refers to operators that produce different subjectivities, it seems possible to call both disciplines because they are united by the elements of individualization, repetition, scrutiny, and shaping of behavior, all central to disciplinary operation.

But how about the silence that such disciplinary ways operate? It seems evident in school practice that quiets and the military ways that subalterns. But what can be said of a discipline that, considering what Foucauldian studies on Christianity have shown, cannot stop from talking, from constraining the body until the complete exhibition of its deepest secrets<sup>9</sup>? The silencing they carry may lie, paradoxically, in this exhibition effect they have— and which is also in the panoptic visibility of *Discipline & Punish*<sup>10</sup>. It is through the revelation they provoke that such disciplinary mechanisms guide the bodies towards an increasing debilitation of will. Therefore, they silence by renouncing the singular message that, in itself, these existences would be capable to affirm in the world. In the case of institutional discipline multiplied since the 17<sup>th</sup> century in Europe, this handling of will is inherent to the productive taming: it is in the extraction of the time of the bodies, in the segmentation of what is there to learn, and the definition of what should be interesting to learn because of its usefulness (Foucault, 1987). In the case of Christian examinations, this abandonment of one's own will is inherent to the voluntary obedience central to the direction of consciousness by this other with whom a relation of disciple is established. The three elements of this obedient attitude, narrated by Foucault (2014) are very enlightening: “*subditio*, submission, which means: I want what the other wills; *patientia*, which means: I want not to will anything different from the other; and *humilitas*, which consists in saying: I do not want to will” (p. 248).

To say that the disciplines which operate by silencing directly influence will is to affirm that they act by removing something that “determines for the subject its own position” (Foucault, 2018, p. 84). Therefore, they seek to create a deep existential silence that can be read as an attempt to remove the affirmative power of self that follows existence. Curiously, as we have seen in the case of more remote Christian practices, this can even be enacted through the incitement to speak. Reason why Foucault (1988) himself adverts, in another text, about the cares to be taken on what is said and what is not said in the discursive games:

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<sup>9</sup> For instance the body publicization of committed sins ordered by the Christian church in its first centuries also narrated by Foucault (2014).

<sup>10</sup> We should quickly return to the well-known panoptic structure: an architecture in which, through a tour that raises among a set of cells disposed in a circular structure makes them visible to those living in the central column: “so many cells, so many small theaters, in which each actor is alone, perfectly individualized and constantly visible”, as pointed out by Foucault (1987, p. 166).

There is no binary division to be made between what one says and what one does not say; we must try to determine the different ways of not saying such things, how those who can and those who cannot speak of them are distributed, which type of discourse is authorized, or which form of discretion is required in either case. There is not one but many silences, and they are an integral part of the strategies that underlie and permeate discourses. (p. 34)

What makes the analysis of silencing, of *taceo*, particularly complex, is the need to be aware of the ways to operate the moralizing forces through which it is established. To all silence corresponds a moral codification that makes existence abandon its singular statements, and that needs to be better mapped in its machinery, so as to indict the place of the operated silences.

## The *sileo* and the ethical discipline of silence

Let us look once more to Foucault and the examination of consciousness; now, however, how it was enacted by the stoics, centuries before Christianity, in Greece. This time, the forma and the ends of this exercise were very different. There was no *a priori* moral code to follow. The examination practice was held at different moments. The stoics did it commonly, for example, to sleep better. Among them, the examination was an activity that focused on the future. Through it, there was a way to control and verify the actions, having as a background the personal objectives that subjects proposed to themselves in those days. In this sense, through this exercise they sought the unsuccessful actions and not the mistakes in a moral sense (Foucault, 2014). From that, the aim is to produce a new formulation of personal rules, based on the senses that the self-examined individual produced for his existence. A movement, therefore, enacted from a singular ethics, seeking to build specific ways of existence, close to what Foucault called an “aesthetics of existence” (Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1995, p. 260): an ethical way to conceive the place of personal choices, which necessarily goes through the attention of the subject to himself. An attention disconnected from an *a priori* moral code, but attentive to the singular ways of existing which allowed to “live in the best way possible” (p. 259).

From the Greek examination of consciousness emerges a third disciplinary mechanism, very different from those of anatomic detail and behavior. With it comes another silence, able to interrupt the previous codifications brought by the relationships with the world. It is worth leaning on this. Let us remember that the elements of individualization, repetition, scrutiny, and modification of existence belong in this model: there is always an individual to, repeatedly, focus

on oneself aiming its own transformation and change in the presence of another that, in some way, guides it. However, this other discipline, as it is established through an ethical and aesthetical relationship that the subject establishes with the world, brings with it different ways to produce the subjectivity. We can think about this discipline and its unfolding with other disciplinary ways from a specific relation with a certain type of confinement, already mentioned in this text: that of prisons and their incarcerations. In his book *A pequena prisão*, Igor Mendes (2017), one of the participants of the demonstrations held during the 2014 World Cup in Brazil, narrates his experience as an inmate during the 8 months he spent in different jails of Bangu (a prison complex in Rio de Janeiro). From his experiences, some elements of this disciplinary mechanism can be pointed out, though in a prison environment such classic notions of discipline are more evident, as stated by Foucault in *Discipline & Punish*.

Much of the production on prison discipline is done through the perspective of the subject on his own condition. Mendes narrates the monstrosity and enormity of the handcuffs that inaugurated his detention; the raw life built from the first moments of his existence as an inmate. There is a disorientation that seems key to the construction of a disciplined body where Mendes is imprisoned:

In the first days, we are in a daze, as if under a shock. All seems terribly chaotic, and the guards seem like sadist beasts. We can hardly believe our eyes, or even, we cannot believe that prison is exactly everything people say about it. (Mendes, 2017, p. 138)

Prison discipline, as narrated by Mendes, is strongly silencing, and emerges from a type of productivity born from the scarcity of the real. To be treated or to be able to be treated “as an animal” (p.80) has a great importance on the elaboration one makes of oneself in a space such as this, and Mendes’s narrative is full of situations in which the prisoners act on themselves from the moral of self-disqualification produced there. The generalized use of antidepressants by the prisoners that can have a hold of them, the need to present yourself to the agents as a police ally to guarantee survival, and the naturalization of the precariousness of existence are only some examples of the destructive power of prison, narrated by the author.

The moral of disqualification and its disciplinary force also operate from a perverse use of the unexpected in Mendes’s (2017) prison experience: “not knowing what to expect at each step: this is the terrible sensation of entering jail for the first time” (p. 69). In its “grey oppressive monotony” (p. 127), the penitentiary system narrated by the author seems populated by

immersions in the dark, notable especially during the transfers from one prison to another, but also the everyday life commanded by the excesses of penitentiary agents.

But there is still another question to the situations lived by Igor Mendes, equally disciplinary, that cannot escape this analysis: the one that maintains the minimal necessary conditions to survive in these spaces. He says:

No matter how absurd and rough that routine was, I tried as soon as possible to get used to it, as a tactic to beat it. As I've said, I divided my day in rigid quadrants, aiming to have well-defined moments to talk, go to the bathroom, work out, sleep, and even think. Each of these gestures, tiny, minuscule, became, in that compressed universe, almost a ritual. This regularity and discipline were fundamental to keep the psychological and physical stability in the harsh dispute against the cruel confinement, thought to break souls and wills. (Mendes, 2017, p. 133)

It is another place of disciplinary action that emerges here, certainly close to that of the Greeks in their examination of consciousness. No longer a discipline that emerges institutionally, to tame, but an operation on oneself that affirms and maintains the possibility of a singular relationship with exteriority. It perhaps refers to another silence, no longer defined in terms of silencing, but understandable as a type of “tranquility foreign to language itself” (Matos, 2018, p. 78), through which the noise of the world seem truly interrupted.

Another work, this time produced as an autobiographical narrative of Japanese writer Haruki Murakami, gives us other clues to think about ethical discipline and this silence that, connected to it, interrupts the world in favor of singular ways to affirm behavior. Murakami is an award-winner author and also a long-distance marathon runner. In his book *What I Talk About When I Talk About Running* (Murakami, 2010), he points out other silences that interrupt what is at stake when producing ways of existing. When resuming his memories of his experience in a 100-kilometer ultramarathon, held in Hokkaido, he remembers his exercises to keep himself on track in his exhausting 40 final kilometers. Together with the common silence of runners, a curious way to enact oneself is shown:

*I'm not a human. I'm a piece of machinery. I don't need to feel a thing. Just forge on ahead.*

That's what I told myself. That's about all I thought about, and that's what got me through. If I were a living person of blood and flesh I would have collapsed from the pain. There definitely was a being called me right there. And accompanying that is a consciousness that is the self. But at that point, I had to force myself to think that those were convenient forms and nothing more. It's a strange way of thinking and definitely a very strange feeling—consciousness trying to deny consciousness. You have to force yourself into an inorganic place. Instinctively I realized that this was the only way to survive [highlight on the original]. (Murakami, 2010, p. 96)

From reading Murakami arises at least two elements on the ways of silencing connected to ethical discipline, which emerge from a “non-said that gives spaces to a significant retreat, producing the conditions of meaning” (Matos, 2018, p. 80) and to create other meanings to the body. The first of them is the construction of a way to exist that takes place not in the *a priori* models of behavior, but that is forged while we continue to live and be in contact with the world. In this contact, we recognize in our meetings something similar to a set of ways of living that moves us and start to prepare ourselves for it. From that, it is possible to think of a discipline that is unrelated to taming. If it keeps the elements of repletion and scrutiny of time and space – as is the case of more intense physical training or strategies to survive adverse conditions –, it is because the senses that emerge from it to those who experience it are more convenient than those connected to its abandonment. Murakami clearly states it; asking himself of his motivations to learn, to stand the pain and the tiredness from this activity, he simply says: I run because it “fits who I am” (Murakami, 2010, p.42). We can see here a personal decision, involved by affections that in some way witness an openness to the stormy world. This “fits who I am” testifies something that seems to decide for us, that involves us in the sense of a repetitive practice that enables welcoming the experienced situation – a desire to be connected to the track, in the case of Murakami, or the force to survive, as in Igor Mendes. In this context, we can see that the silence of who voluntarily exercises, for example, is a very different construction of corporeities from those experience in the planned destitution of prisons or the ardent moral of Christian obedience. What we can see, in the cases which portray an ethical form of discipline, is a silence connected to a body used as a filter of experiences themselves.

This filtering, from the corporeity, refers to the own element of listening contained in this silence that questions the *a priori* meanings of language. Silencing, in this case, is a “mechanism for resonance”, as stated by Jean-Luc Nancy (2014, p. 41), through which one enters this listening that is never a way of permanence (in the case of the image we see), but a “come”, a “passing”, a “prolonging”, and an “permeating” (p. 29). Listening is a type of navigation that places us in an intrinsic relationship with what is external to us. We permeate and are permeated by the sound space where it happens. And the silence, says Nancy, is what is open to this relationship. What does it do? It transforms the body into a sound box that fully vibrates through listening.

We can then say that Murakami uses this “founding silence” (Orlandi, 2007, p. 29): he dives into his intimate running experience, to compose with it and survive in it:

I try hard to reduce the perceptible world to the narrowest parameters. All I can see is the ground three yards ahead, nothing beyond. My whole world consists of the ground three yards ahead. No need to think beyond that. The sky and wind, the grass, the cows munching the grass, the spectators, cheers, lake, novels, reality, the past, memory —these mean nothing to me. (Murakami, 2010, p. 97)

Curiously, then, the silence spoken by Murakami – the resistance of Igor Mendes and the ethical examination of the stoics – produces in the continuity of the ethical affirmation of an experience the own unmaking experienced. So that such a silence operates, we should be available to be, in a certain way, torn apart from the event until we reach the mute radicalism of existence, previous even to individuality. That is what allowed Murakami to fit “into an inorganic place” (Murakami, 2010, p. 96), to “exist as a machine” (p.97):

the deepest dimension of silence, the radically discrete and mute character of existence, often imperceptible, and considered despicable, but that has an active power, persistent and virulent; a “non-meaning” that cannot be confused with the “non-meaning yet”, but establishes itself as a “never meaning”, “not able to mean”, “not having a meaning”. This flaw in language is structuring, because, on one hand, it limits the meaning, on the other, motivates and boosts it (Matos, 2018, p. 86)

With Murakami, we can think silence as inaugurating ways to experience oneself from the disruptive dive in the event, that interrupts meanings and produces other senses to existence; interruptions through which the event takes us completely and mutes us completely faced by the *a priori* a-significance, opening space to processes to create new senses for our singular relationships with the world.

## **From the pedagogies of silencing to silence as a pedagogical act: the corporealities of the now**

Between *taceo* and *sileo*, it seems possible to think about an array of disciplinary nuances and their silences, that directly reverberate on how corporealities are built in their relationships with the world. There is a visceral matrix to silence that cannot, therefore, be ignored. Vicariousity to be understood not only as an anatomic-physiological base of incision in the events, but as ways to found an interiority always paradoxical by which sensible frontiers are established on what the subject understands as him/herself.

Contemporary silences, as we have seen, always produce a suffocating Vicerality. See for instance, the attempts to restrict the body in legislative proposals that seek to give anti-Bolsonaro demonstrations a criminal characteristic. Bill number 3019/2020 is one of them: “Single paragraph. The groups called antifa (anti-facist) and other organizations with similar ideologies are considered a terrorist organization” (Projeto de lei 3019, 2020). The project is part of a criminalization policy that, in general, is not new: it embodies in a specific figure a great evil to, after, from it, build a social unviability and the necessary persecution aiming its disappearance – that is what happened with “the communist” in several moments of recent history and the selective fragilization of certain political figures called “corrupt” established by legal actions, such as *Lava Jato* (Rolnik, 2018). However, in the pandemic context, the constraints against anti-fascist resistance is particularly ordering: it gradually gives back to the bodies their possibility to move, but criminalizes the body that moves towards any space to contest the presidency, as it can be understood, under this legal dispositive, as responsible for “inciting violence and practice of violence, under the false guise of democracy defense” (Projeto de lei 3019, 2020).

In the case of the anti-fascist body, the contemporary policies of suffocation seem to inaugurate another line of action, particularly important for the ways to govern after the pandemic. In a time when national economies grind with a sound that can shake the most intrepid rulers, able to free them for routine displacements and, at the same time, keep their distance from the streets, particularly fruitful today to overthrow national leaders. The demonstrations need to continue unacceptable, especially faced by the national failures of governments such as Trump’s and Bolsonaro’s, and the anti-fascist suffocation that will follow can produce with undeniable speed the unacceptability and the destruction of these bodies in agency, in their “right to disappear” (Butler, 2018, p. 31).

The institutionalized ways of silencing, therefore, are continuously reedited. They have much to teach; they are generally connected to pedagogical regimes, understood here, as in Masschelein and Simons (2014), as ways to establish a “deficit position from who does not know, has no competence” (p.36) – or from that, we may broaden, those who have no social legitimacy, the political condition understood, in some level, as necessary. They are therefore silencing pedagogies. This educational character embedded in operations to silence, we know at least since Foucault, does not work simply by coercion. Supported by the political analysis of Mozambican philosopher José Gil (2018) on populism, we can say that such a silencing

pedagogy commonly acts in a game that relates the so-called disempowerment of the will of some and the “power of belief” (p. 438) in others. Thus, contemporary silencing can be politically thought in two levels: a first that absorbs from unwanted bodies the will that founds its effectiveness – as done by Igor Mendes, with tamed bodies or the debilitation of resistance that, from insurgent, becomes debilitated and demotivated; and a second that imprints strengthened beliefs in the bodies that should work as silencers.

When does an idea gain a sufficiently strong support to become an article of faith? When it is incorporated... When does the incorporation of an idea take place, or forms the total belief with which one supports it? When it and the practices it induces becomes a vital need. And when does that happen? When the usefulness gains an indispensable value, a power on which human life depends. (Gil, 2018, pp. 438-439)

Thus, the ways through which relate the strengthening of beliefs and the restraints of will in the communication between the bodies give important clues to understand the visceral elements of *taceo* in its contemporary version. The choreography<sup>11</sup> of the bodies that inhabit spaces where different perspectives gather, such as demonstrations or heated debates, strongly depend on this game. Also because there is a type of regime of reciprocal involvements through which bodies capture (or get rid of) one another amidst the power relations that circulate between them. In the case of silencing, it is always a closure of the belief that operates “when a stronger vision captures and devours the vision of the weaker dissolving it”, emerging from this a “unique hegemonic perspective” (Gil, 2018, p. 444) embodied. In this sense, we can think of the operations that make silence as an action of “bad involvement” between the bodies (p. 322), as they intend to “imprison and subject the other, destroying its self-affirmation” (p. 322).

However, through the corporal-political lenses of Gil (2018), there is also another way of involvement. The good involvement “does not close the vision in a finished totality” (p. 443). It opens the relational space between the bodies and of those with the world, widening it as a “affective environment of mutual recognition, savage, pre-verbal, immediate” (p. 322). This can also refer to certain ways to see silence as “pedagogical” (Masschelein & Simons, 2014, p. 33), no longer connected to a moralizing pedagogy, but an exercise of openness to other possibilities, to “guide to the outside” (p. 39) while “reminding that one is implied in what one does” (p. 38).

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<sup>11</sup> The notion of choreography, as pointed out by André Lepecki (2012), is taken here as an “expressive matrix of the political role” (p. 46), materializing compositions of bodies that are, at the same time, temporary and establishers of other becomings.

Therefore, the forces of involvement are this time correlated to the founding forces of *sileo*, its disruptive and innovative potency. A last example, more localized, but with equally political reverberations, can add some elements to reflect on what we can call a pedagogical act of silence. We present here a brief report from a corporal exercise we proposed in an outreach course adapted to the recent conditions of pandemic and social isolation. The exercise invited participants to reproduce any routine gesture, focusing on its constitutive elements. It asked, therefore, to pay close attention to its details, its anatomic- physiological callings, and the affections that emerge from the activation of the movement. In one of this texts, the participant narrates the simple act of grabbing a cellphone from the shelf, check it, and placed it again somewhere:

Shoulders low and tensioning the trapezius. Almost always the right shoulder, a tiny crane until the elbow, catapults the hand and grabs it. The chin close to the chest. The nape, stiff, lingers. The neck raise, the head weights towards the floor, the eyelid dropped. Eyes stuck, little aware, down. What supports the whole body is the energy from the shoulder blades, the tension of the trapezius. The head wanders. Fingers and eyes, now, all in a body, therefore, forgotten. Supported by the shoulder blades, the hips, the slowness of the legs, the right thumb moves a lot, up and down, the hand in a claw forces its own disappearance. The jaw restrained, tense. The lips gets thinner, the nose narrower in an incomplete breathing. Walking slowly, stretching once more the arms until the fingertips, leaves a weight. The body rises, more united, walks.

What took place in the silence of this gesture? The body is here involved during its quietness through gesture itself, which becomes thought – if we remember that thinking “refers to what comes from somewhere else, circumscribes what goes on, what goes on asking us to given an answer” (Masschelein & Simons, 2014, p. 38). Thus, this involvement, though connected with a gesture of the body itself, is based on the subjective opening that enlarges the experience. It emerges then a space that is

the territory of the creating body, an involving space without defined contours, a space-shadow of the body that follows without tying it, that expands and shrinks, shapes itself and metamorphoses, prolonging itself beyond its own body, as pure body of space with no organs, ready to incorporate new organs from the outside or produce them within. (Gil, 2018, p. 444)

This allows another body to be, in fact, shaped in the testimony – with an attention not only towards the anatomic movement, but also towards what makes us understand what is “little lucid”, toughened, incomplete, or “more united”. The silence capture of corporeity, here, surpasses what already existed and finds another understanding of oneself.

This may be the operative nucleus of this key silence: interrupting what is given, it opens space to expand the body itself in its gestures and thoughts. This takes place in the expansion of Murakami in the tracks, the enlargement of the ways to survive of Igor Mendes, and in every pedagogical act, from yourself to yourself or from yourself to another that can be seen “not as someone who transmits knowledge, but also as someone that supports the will” (Masschelein & Simons, 2014, p. 39). There lies the great difference between these two silences: to the force of disenchantment and the suppression of will of *taceo* is contraposed another, that of *sileo*, of strengthening, through the interruption that causes, this same will – which is itself the potency of movement (p. 34).

The pedagogical value of *sileo* is grounded, in two movements provoked by it: on one hand, as we have seen, it makes the instant work as an anchor point and production of corporeity, when we start, through the silence and listening opened by it, to navigate deeper in the world, what questions the founding frontiers of the subject. In this sense, the fundamental silence tends towards what José Gil (2019), in some texts, call “void”, achieved more fully in meditative practices, for example:

When abolishing all mental content (ideas, images, volitions, feelings, emotions), the self...sinks, disintegrates, and disappears for no longer having an object to apply itself, nor even oneself. Nothing stays and, in the space of nothingness, emerges the void. The void is not thought – because there is nothing to think -, nor lived – as there is no subject –, it is simply the space of impersonal and vital energy that trespasses the individual and supports it. (p. 145)

Obviously, this is a limit situation; in our everyday silences, such undoing will not necessarily be fully achieved. In any way, it is always, in the case of *sileo*, an operation on oneself, that produces an opening that throws us in this empty space that is “the ‘*pure expressible*’, before language, from where floods meaning” [original highlight], “floods the singularities” (Gil, 2019, p. 147). To dissolve *a priori* corporal frontiers, listening derived from this silence first confounds the limits between the so-called organisms and what we think as the sensible body: in silence, we can hear the ocean and breath better, we hear a scream and are filled with the angst that shapes it, we hear a moan and enter in the pleasure it arises. Through this body-sound box silence creates, we are the ocean, the scream, and the moan; we dive into the affections derived from their gathering, from which they create corporeities and existences that were not, until then, present.

Conversely, in this resonance with the world there is another possible movement, guided by will. From this gathering, it restates the condition of the subject, being, however, above “every calculation of interest” (Foucault, 2018, p. 84); therefore it is not a want grounded in the pure individualized intention, but, on the contrary, of an answer, organizer of its own experience, that exists through the obligatory engagements in which the world events involve us. Masschlein and Simons (2014), not by chance, associate it to childhood, seen not as an age range, but exactly as a “void” that “implies a load or a demand for answer” (p. 35) through the contact with the world.

Therefore, on one hand, silencing pedagogy invests in a game between legitimized beliefs and the deflation of will— keeping both as markers of a desirable individuality or not confronted by the relationships with others. On the other hand, silence as a pedagogical act, marked by the relationship of listening to the world and retaking the will that derives from the meetings with it. It is through dealing with these two places occupied by the pedagogical action that we found much of what we commonly conceive as our educational spaces. As we have seen, these silent regimes are densely associated with the disciplinary ways that we enact, which makes it unavoidable to question the nature of the disciplines and silences in our educational work. What if we could think about a classroom with a minimum level of silencing and full of opportunities for silence? What if our educational meetings, in these online times, were elements to establish a fundamental silencing, able to take students and ourselves towards an ethical way to produce yourself? Maybe the silences have, until now, something revolutionary to teach us.

## Silencing...

The policies of suffocation produce ways of existence and inexistence. When asphyxiating enough, they reap lives, as they did with Floyd and many others that, faced by the inability, maybe unprecedented even in the history of a constantly fragilized State such as Brazil, continue to perish in the rooms and anterooms of a pandemic hospitalization/internment. But, fortunately, it is not uncommon that suffocation finds the stubbornness of bodies that maintain the power of life. In these cases, the perseverance to exist commonly becomes a tremendous

power, an affirmative desire faced by the frustration of the executioner. We need this vengeance that is normally gestated in silence, through this movement of leaving yourself, which we call here, will: an element that produces an uncontrollable insurgence supported in the common vibration, previous to the individuals, that unrests bodies in shared spaces of insurrection. From it may derive not only possibilities to escape the strong arms of authoritarianism, but also contaminations able to multiply the adhesion of the bodies. We are faced here by this corporal ability to emanate microscopic forces that, agencied, produce atmospheres, sensible material densities that capture and produce meaning to those close to them. We need a constellation of anti-fascist bodies, sufficiently dense to physically bother those who want to overthrow them. A body-in-common, strong enough not to take for itself the same logic of suffocation, but to make the air thin to those that, now, constrain it, forcing them to breathe somewhere else.

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