The body as a political statement

El cuerpo como afirmación política

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Abstract: How, in the face of normative structures, power relations, possession, and bio-political control, can the dispossessed subject benefit from recognition and make place to his inscription in a better future? What force and what forms of influence does this subject have at his disposal to contest the injustice, dispossession, and indifference that capitalism and liberalism tacitly distribute? With these questions in mind, this paper aims to reflect on the possibility of political agency for those whose ways of life are not assimilated or recognized by norms, and therefore are excluded of legal resources or protective mechanisms to demand an effective change of their precarious state. Grounded on Judith Butler's analysis of the performative in the political, the performative body reveals, in this context, an agency stronghold and *locus* of political argumentation that envisages more than an appeal to mere tolerance of the different in contemporary societies.

Keywords: body, dispossession, political performativity, relationality, precarity.

Resumen: ¿Cómo, frente a estructuras normativas, relaciones de poder, posesión y control biopolítico, puede el sujeto desposeído beneficiar de reconocimiento y dar lugar a su inscripción en un futuro mejor? ¿Qué fuerza y qué formas de influencia tiene este sujeto a su disposición para impugnar la injusticia, el desposeimiento y la indiferencia que tácitamente son distribuidas por el capitalismo y el liberalismo? Con estas preguntas en mente, este trabajo tiene como objetivo reflexionar sobre la posibilidad de agencia política para aquellos cuyas formas de vida no son asimiladas o reconocidas por las normas, y por lo tanto están excluidos de recursos legales o mecanismos de protección para exigir un cambio efectivo de su estado precario. Basado en el análisis de Judith Butler de lo performativo en lo político, el cuerpo performativo revela, en este contexto, un bastión de agencia y un lugar de argumentación política que contempla más que un apelo a la mera tolerancia de lo diferente en las sociedades contemporáneas.

Palabras clave: cuerpo, desposeimiento, performatividad política, relacionalidad, precariedad.

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«This is how the human comes into being, again and again, as that which we have yet to know.» (Butler, 2003) [2]

Norms can be problematized acknowledging its dual character - on the one hand, they are themselves the cause of socio-political problems (by defining who and/or what counts, they create a limit that inevitably excludes someone) but, on the other, they still are a way of guaranteeing protection, rights and duties. Thus, challenging normative structures which are at once restrictive and emancipatory requires solutions where coercive or excluding relations and actions are not potentiated, but rather deconstructed and reformulated. The performative body reveals an agency stronghold for those that are not assimilated by norms or recognized as valid or "proper" human lives and still demand the right to be as they are without being subjected to discrimination and violence. In the absence of legal resources for recognition or protection, the "invisible", illegal and "non-conforming" lives risk themselves by appearing and exposing the limitations and the exclusionary face of norms (or even laws). Their manifestations urge us to think about policies that operate through framing models of theories and practices that usually remain unquestioned and result negligent, unjust or insufficient in managing contemporary social challenges. In tangible and sometimes real time broadcasted public demonstrations in squares all over the world (e.g., Arab Spring, Syntagma Square, Mothers of May, Zuccotti Park), the body itself is confirmed as a political vehicle of criticism and argumentation (oftentimes by its mere presence) (Butler & Athanasiou, 2013).

To elaborate further on this matter, I will first address the concept of "dispossession", and then I will try to elucidate the link between dispossession and "precarity", which will be preponderant throughout this reflection about relationality and corporeal political agency. I will follow Judith Butler's poststructuralist interpretation of those notions.

1. BEING AND HAVING

Dispossession is a term valid within two possible readings. It means subjection to norms and regulations that already precede the *subject-yet-to-be* (Butler & Athanasiou, 2013: 1) and which contribute to a heteronomy that restricts individual abuse. But it also refers to processes and ideologies that devalue or demoralize individuals or groups of people, and operates a *distribution of vulnerability* (Butler, 2018: 210) grounded on normativity and regulation processes of the population.

In any of these formulations we are in a domain of relationality and coexistence of diverse bodies, alluding to dependency not only between people but also between people and the world or the environment. In these terms it is not appropriate, therefore, to establish an absolute human isolation or autonomy. As beings that are subject to deprivation (of land, life, shelter, food, identity), and subject to

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[2] In "Violence, Mourning, Politic", *Studies in Gender and Sexuality*, 4:1, 2003, 9-37. Pg. 36.

loss and uncertainty, we are fundamentally conditioned by powers that both sustain and normalize us (Butler, 2018).

Also reflecting on the term *dispossession*, we can deconstruct the social sense of ownership or property, and the social sense of the autonomous individual. This deconstruction is possible by the encounter with vulnerability as a condition of existence - vulnerability to what already exists before us, to others bodies, to uncertainty, to violence, and to misunderstanding (Butler, 2003). It is important to underline, however, that the notions of dispossession and possession are so closely linked that «struggles against dispossession too easily become struggles for possession often through the assertion of rights» (Roy, 2016: A3, citing L. Porter). In my view, this is also paradigmatically elucidated by the concept of «accumulation by dispossession»[3] that David Harvey elaborates in his book *The New Imperialism*.

Within this deconstruction we may find political alternatives that depart preferably from the lack of possession or property in the norms, replacing those terms with, for example, *belonging* (and wanting or not to belong to something, or someone)[4]. These alternatives appear also as an effective way of affirming *the right to exist* (Butler & Athanasiou, 2013: 101), an extra-legal right that is realized by the public appearance of those who don´t count in the eyes of the law (e.g., illegal immigrants) or that are rendered invisible by norms of gender, race, sexuality, nationality or able-bodiedness.

Judith Butler (2013) asks whether the production of possessive individualism necessarily entails a repudiation of more primary, dependent, and relational modes of existence. So, the challenge is set, according to Athena Athanasiou's reflection, on a double front:

> «[f]irst, we must think of dispossession outside the logic of possession (as a hallmark of modernity, liberalism, and humanism), that is, not only to avoid but also to question the exclusionary calculation of property in late liberal forms of power; and secondly, we must elaborate why this reflexive gesture is politically significant.» (*in* Butler & Athanasiou, 2013: 7)

In a universalizing demand for the definition of *human* or *humanity*, "having" is an essential prerequisite of "being". This is outlined, for instance, by the consideration of the body as individual property, a premise that is admittedly a

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[3] Based on Marx's description of primitive accumulation [revealed in processes like the commodification and privatization of land and the forceful expulsion of peasant populations; the conversion of various forms of property rights (common, collective, state, etc.) into exclusive private property rights; the commodification of labor power and the suppression of alternative (indigenous) forms of production and consumption; colonial, neo-colonial, and imperial processes of appropriation of assets (including natural resources)], David Harvey explains as follow: «The disadvantage of these assumptions is that they relegate accumulation based upon predation, fraud, and violence to an 'original stage' that is considered no longer relevant or […] as being somehow 'outside of capitalism as a closed system'. A general reevaluation of the continuous role and persistence of the predatory practices of 'primitive' or 'original' accumulation within the long historical geography of capital accumulation is, therefore, very much in order […]. Since it seems peculiar to call an ongoing process 'primitive' or 'original' I shall, in what follows, substitute these terms by the concept of 'accumulation by dispossession'» (Harvey, 2003: 144)

[4] This notion of belonging may also include, for example, the desire, the hope of being part of a different way of cohabiting the political (Butler & Athanasiou, 2013).

founding moment of liberalism. However, some bodies (the most immediate example: that of slaves) are excluded from this biopolitical definition that constitutively combines life, property and freedom (Butler & Athanasiou, 2013). Throughout the history of political and philosophical thought, property relations have structured and operated the moral concepts of "person", "self-belonging", "agency", and "identity", and the governance of property ownership and self-sufficiency are still attached to colonialist, capitalist, patriarchal, hetero-normative, militaristic and ethno-nationalist legacies (Butler, 2018). In this sense, it may be somehow ground-breaking to follow a problematization of presence as we see, from Butler: «[i]f, for example, we are 'present' to each other, we may be dispossessed by that very presence», and «there is an implicit presence in the idea of bodily exposure that can become the occasion of either subjugation or recognition» (2013: 13). By exposing ourselves to the other, we commit ourselves to a community of political resistance and transformative action (Butler & Athanasiou, 2013) where the "I" includes "us" and where a collective and corporeal form of agency gains force to change the *status quo*.

Let's not confuse, however, *to be* dispossessed with *becoming* dispossessed. Among these designations there is no causal, chronological or ontological connection. Being dispossessed is a primeval disposition of human relationality that expresses the basis of subjection to contingency; becoming dispossessed is a derivation of forced or enforced deprivation, land, rights, ways of life, desires, belonging (Butler & Athanasiou, 2013).

2. MATERIALIZATION OF THE UNKNOWN

When thinking presence and a metaphysics of presence that privileges the appearance of the material body (Butler, 2015: 55), we inevitably enter the domain of agency, because as resistance, the act transforms the presenting itself into an occasion of critical positioning and in a statement of "I am". This is a way for the excluded, the forgotten, and the neglected to finally materialize.

Self-presence is a link to a potentially harmful interpellation that becomes the condition for the possibility of non-normative re-significations for what matters as presence (Butler & Athanasiou, 2013). Although self-identity carries the genealogical background of the metaphysics of presence, it is not determined by this weight. Being dispossessed by the presence of others and by our own presence to the other is the only way to be present. This presenting to the other takes place within the limits of self-reliance and self-knowledge, «in the wake of the endless finitude of the human» (Butler & Athanasiou, 2013: 17), and in dimensions that defy epistemological criteria. Often, for this presence (or even the absence) to be acknowledge, the norms by which the "I" and the "Other" are instituted must be abandoned. We are necessarily implicated in the desires and anxieties that presence and possession generate and, as Butler points out, «the logic of appropriation and dispossession, whether colonial or neo-colonial, capitalist or neoliberal, persists by reproducing a metaphysics of presence in the form of violence that is inherent to inappropriate and expropriated subjectivities» (2013: 18). In Butler's reflexion of

Derrida's *ontopology*, which links the ontological value of being to a particular *topo,* we can follow the ways by which dispossession still carries the regulating practices of the *being-in*, the *dislocating-from* and the *putting-in* – those are the practices that accentuate an inhibition of the full intelligibility of the human. Dispossession is

> «[…] mapped in our bodies, in particular bodies-in-their-space, through normative matrices, but also through situated practices of raciality, gender, sexuality, intimacy, physical ability, economy and citizenship. It produces dispossessed subjectivities, making them subhuman or hauntingly too human, linking them to calculated self-named identities and putting them in their proper place.» (Butler & Athanasiou, 2013: 18)

Thus, to politically designate the groups of people who become differentially exposed to violence, poverty, injury, demoralization and death, becomes related to the term "precarity": «'precarity' describes exactly the lives of those whose 'proper place is non-being'» (Butler & Athanasiou, 2013: 19). How can we look away from what is implied here? This is directly linked to a calculated and tacit social dispensability that is fundamental to the biopolitical neoliberal regime and, by derivation, to various forms of (de)valorisation such as social death, abandonment, impoverishment, racism, fascism, homophobia, sexual harassment, militarism, malnutrition, industrial accidents, labour injustices, privatization, and liberal management of empathy and aversion.

Achille Mbembe's *Necropolitics* confirms with clarity that the maximum exponent of power is the decision about who deserves to live and who should die, «and it does so in both spectacular and quotidian ways, insistently and insinuatingly» (Butler & Athanasiou, 2013: 20). This is how Mbembe puts it:

> «I have put forward the notion of necropolitics and necropower to account for the various ways in which, in our contemporary world, weapons are deployed in the interest of maximum destruction of persons and the creation of death-worlds, new and unique forms of social existence in which vast populations are subjected to conditions of life conferring upon them the status of living dead.» (Mbembe, 2003: 40)

I mentally underline the terms "death-worlds" and "living dead". The power of dispossession is revealed, by these imposing molds, in the work of reducing to the unintelligible the ways of life of subjects, communities or populations, mainly «by eviscerating for them the conditions of possibility for life and the 'human' itself» (Butler & Athanasiou, 2013: 20). In the context of neoliberal forms of capitalism, bodies become increasingly disposable, dispossessed by capital and its exploratory excesses. At the same time, they are individualized and subdued by means of subtle and reflective biopolitical techniques aiming their self-formation, self-care, self-formation and self-government. Those power techniques, as well as its resources and consequent vulnerability, are distributed differently and unequally between different bodies. The global biopolitical management of life and death is

thus being reinvented, revitalized and reconfigured. And this is also made evident in operations of war against terrorism, in management of economic crises, in the normalization of poverty and precariousness in many countries around the world, in racism, in migration policies and in the regimes of colonial occupation that still persist (Butler & Athanasiou, 2013).

But let us not lose focus: dispossession has a logic of violence, but also a logic of condition of possibility of the human. Along with its logic of violence revealed in the accommodation of mechanisms of political and social negative differentiation, we also find the connotation with the incompleteness and with an undetermined being in permanent (re)construction trough the awareness of our constituent interdependence and vulnerability. "Differential allocation of humanness" is a designation by Athena Athanasiou (*in* Butler & Athanasiou, 2013: 31) to elucidate that the human cannot, despite all attempts, be presumed. We will always have to return to that expression when we see a border between those who are "properly" human and those who are not, between those who are entitled to a long life and those who are relegated to a slow death.

But that frontier can be deflected or dissolved because, as Athanasiou refers, «the point is that the human has no 'proper' place to take outside social situatedness and allocation, including the exposure to the possibility of being undone» (in Butler & Athanasiou, 2013: 32).

It is important to clarify, however, that the "differential allocation of humanness" does not refer to a new phenomenon. Colonialist violence and legal recognition of citizenship rights are only two examples among others of that logic that facilitates forced closure or containment (even spatially) (Coleman, 2016: 1066). Any version of the human is haunted by a loss that, moreover, is usually devalued, concealed or ignored (Butler & Athanasiou, 2013). This loss or absence of what is understood as ours is a crucial element to comprehend expropriation (of land, goods, work, identity), and also theft and expulsion. The challenge that this comprehension envisages allows us to grasp how we tend to oppose almost immediately possession and dispossession, and this is something that limits us circularly because we evade questions such as "who and how excluded from the 'human'?", and "how could this category human have come to be formed under an abjection or demoralization/devaluation of some bodies?". Rescuing the human may be accomplished, according to Butler and Athanasiou, by the radicalization of the experience of loss that results from exposure to normative and determinative fictions that insist in excluding what is after all perfectly intelligible if only we adopt different thought perspectives.

Therefore, being in coexistence with different ways of life, and in social specters of co-implication, gives rise to a tremor in the certainty of a self-sufficient subject (Butler & Athanasiou, 2013), and in what we take for a fact or for "natural". Through our bodies we are involved in dense and complex processes of interdependent relations, we acknowledge that we permanently expose ourselves, we introduce ourselves, we discontinue ourselves, we give ourselves to others and to the regulation of desires, sexual links, kinship relations and conditions of humanization (Butler, 2003).

3. Changing normativity without enhancing it

It should be anticipated that what is at stake here is the possibility of breaking the galvanizing terms of the intelligible (like "human", "property", "human rights", "citizenship") by opening up to cultural contestation and to alternatives of political action, an openness translated by discourses that are non-reducible to the terms of liberalism and capitalism. This is not about promoting tolerance or about broadening the regulatory mechanisms of the social world. Rather, it is intended to be a pertinent review of the naturalization of the very foundations of normativity, and trying to generate space for what has no space of its own according to the heterosexual, white, healthy, masculine western corset of thinking the human and its actions.

Exposing the regulatory forces that confer cohesion and uphold the ideals of neoliberalism, and deprive it of its universalizing and abstract guide, also serves to abandon the premises on which politics itself is based, enabling other ways of structuring, exercising and thinking the political (Butler, 2018). As Butler and Athanasiou point out, everything depends on the ability to instrumentalize the power of the state without being subjugated to it in other ways. Political performativity, by challenging the distribution that norms institute as social differentiation, permeates the construction of the "I" and inherently the politically subsumed "we". And it challenges them by assuming dispossession and precariousness as constitutive of us all. Constitutive, yes, but not determinant, because «[o]ur autopoiesis occurs within a horizon of regulatory ideals that determine who can and cannot be an intelligible self. Thus, it is with others that we assume and at the same time potentiate the norms that threaten us to make it unrecognizable or overly recognizable» (Butler & Athanasiou, 2013: 69).

Recognition is itself a performative category, bringing the potential for transformation to the political sphere. It is not an ontological category, but serves ontological frames (Butler & Athanasiou, 2013). From this we see that, in order to work with recognition without succumbing to new formulas of exclusion, it is essential to distinguish between justice and legal regimes[5]. Political performativity takes place when what does not count or is not countable proves to be reflexive and starts to count, not only because it is enumerable, but also because it appears and/or presents itself: discoursing using one's own body, even if in silence, as an alternative to discursive language, enables each one to say *I am here*, *I exist*, *I am not disposable*. This is political action, and it also can be understood more broadly as "a way of producing a political subject, such that the subject is a political effect of this very exercise", and which names that «unauthorized exercise of a right to existence that propels the precarious into political life» (Butler & Athanasiou, 2013: 101).

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[5] As clarified by Judith Butler, «[t]he exercise of the right is something that happens within the context of precarity and takes form as a precarious exercise that seeks to overcome its own precarity. And even if it is not supported by existing law (laws that deny citizenship, for instance), it is still supported by extralegal cultural, political, and discursive conditions, translations from other struggles, and modes of organizing that are neither state-supported nor state-centered» (in Butler & Athanasiou, 2013: 101).

The bodies assembled in public space exemplify relations of equality, with no hierarchies, something that is not exactly included in liberal and neoliberal political and economic regimes. And most importantly, these demands are not placed in terms of negotiability, since the point is precisely to draw attention to a structuring inequality and its increasingly heinous formulations (Butler & Athanasiou, 2013). In these meetings or manifestations

«there is an indexical force of the body that arrives with other bodies in a zone visible to media coverage: it is this body, and these bodies, that require employment, shelter, health care, and food, as well as a sense of a future that is not the future of unpayable debt; it is this body, or these bodies, or bodies like this body or these bodies, that live the condition of an imperiled livelihood, decimated infrastructure, accelerating precarity.» (Butler, 2018: 10).

When bodies come together in public places, exercising the plural and performative right to appear, the body is inserted into the political domain of *logos*, the public sphere discourse, the power of speech. In its function and significance, this appearance exposes a request of the body itself for a more dignified and supported life, economically, socially and politically (Butler, 2018).

Neoliberal rationality demands self-sufficiency, even as a moral ideal, while its power relations destroy that same possibility in the economic realm and establish each member of the population as potentially or effectively precarious. It even makes use of the ever-present threat of precariousness to justify its regulation of public spaces, to operate a "spatial ostracism" (Roy, 2016: A8) and the deregulation of market expansion. The precariousness induced and skilfully distributed in the population produces changes in the psychic reality, and the more the individuals try to live up to that requirement of responsibility, the more social isolation and more subjection to precariousness is observed. From this isolation we see anxiety about the future of each life and the feeling that it has failed morally (Butler, 2018). It is inevitable to see here a redefinition of responsibility and accountability, in the requirement that the individual becomes his own helmsman in a context that fails precisely to give him the conditions for that autonomy. It is pertinent, therefore, to note that a public assembly proceeds with its requests also by exemplifying an ethical alternative expressed in the concreteness of the exposure to the body that is beside us and we do not know, by sharing threatening conditions to physical well-being, validating a plural yet provisional coexistence as an alternative to individual accountability (Butler, 2018). In fact, when we respond to what is different (joining other bodies in the public square) we are already making us responsible for the other, thus exceeding self-responsibility.

It is urgent to ask whether this affection that arises from being constitutively and differentially beyond ourselves or *beside* ourselves[6] can in turn be a resource

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[6] As Athena Athanasiou puts it: «[e]ither in the sense of a nonidentical relation to the self, or in the sense of political rage and passion, being 'beside oneself' means belonging to others, as it were, who are themselves decentered and 'out of joint,' tied to norms that exceed them, dispossessed in various ways» (*in* Butler & Athanasiou, 2013: 72).

for the realization of new political models of being-in-common. By understanding *responsiveness-as-responsibility* and *dispossession-as-disposition* (disposition to meet another, disposition to expose ourselves to other without predicting the outcome) (Butler & Athanasiou, 2013) we will possibly begin to draw an answer to how or what can we give when we are not even total owners of ourselves?

This places us in a double-sided domain –resist and survive– so it is difficult to manage this exposure when we can never predict what will come from what we do not know. This risk is inherent to the insistence in remaining receptive and impressionable (Butler & Athanasiou, 2013). But it is precisely by taking this risk that we give ourselves to others. What underlies these problematizations is that performativity emerges precisely as a power that the precarious (those not allowed to exist by legal regimes or those abandoned by the law) can use to expose and challenge the conditions of their precariousness. The notion of *precarious life* that Judith Butler suggests is a way of politicizing social ontology, one that does not configure at first who counts and who doesn't count as human. This purported *ontological insurrection* (Butler & Athanasiou, 2013) is paramount to contemporary theoretical political work. In the eyes of Athena Athanasiou, who dialogues with Butler on the subject of dispossession as political performativity, radical politics does not have to (and should not) be linked to ontological foundations and prefigurations, even though it is inevitable to refer to them. Radical politics must be concerned with the deconstruction of these ontological structures that underpin current politics.

The act of addressing or responding to what is troubling or requesting us exceeds the formal structures of capturing, remembering. witnessing, naming. It exceeds because it allows imagination to delineate other paths, and where language fails, this imagination entices us to grasp the uniqueness in the abstract multitude. To see the singularizing face, which brings its own narrative and which brings those who are being decimated and reduced politically closer to insignificance, reminds the levinasian face that says *you will not kill.*

How then can the viability of a life be claimed without having the political starting point in the subject of reason? Well, as we have been contemplating, vulnerability, precariousness and the notion of dispossession provide the opportunity to form a political base grounded in relationality and community. This proposes a shift from the narcissist, autonomous and sovereign self-identity to the politics and ethics of post-identity subjectivities exposed to abandonment, vulnerability and precariousness of oneself and of others (Butler & Athanasiou, 2013).

The «political promise of performativity» (Butler & Athanasiou, 2013: 140) opens the political to future meanings that are, by definition, unpredictable. Also, it allows in the performative excess of social temporality to resist the attempt to totalize and naturalize the authoritarian forces of meaning. This would lay the foundations to reflect on the possibility of an agonistic democracy, one that goes far beyond the mere extension of the inclusion and tolerance that liberalism also displays. Or, as Athanasiou points out, it is about thinking and affirming a political praxis that goes beyond and even against the normative reducibility to neoliberal governance techniques. As she concludes,

«perhaps this is the spirit, and the lasting value, but also the continuing task of ag-onistic democratic performativity: to disseminate its own fixity and certainty, to embrace its situated contingency and its provisional character, suspend closed def-initions of political subjectivity and action and, ultimately, remain open to their unpredictable potentialities and errors.» (*in* Butler & Athanasiou, 2013: 155)

We then see the possibility of moving from a perspective of rights that claim and reinforce forms of individualism (and that sees the social as a mere col-lection of individuals) to a perspective of plural performativity and social forms of agency.

4. FINAL NOTES ON HOPE, IMAGINATION AND FREEDOM

Up to this point we saw how relational and corporeal forms of street politics emerge from people's resistance to pervasive and insidious forms of socially and culturally determined dispensability. Political performativity is confirmed and ena-bled in gatherings or meetings in public space where, exemplifying only with their bodies, people strive for the right to their ways of life and to a future, understood here not only in individualistic terms but also in creating the conditions for a common world to endure.

The vulnerability of the body and the revolt become the (undetermined) conditions of the possibility of each participant. The body becomes «the occasion for a turbulent performativity» (Butler & Athanasiou, 2013: 178) which paves the way for thinking otherwise the materiality and affectivity in embodied forms of agency.

These alternative forms of agency are also advocating for a «radical demo-cratic imagination» that redefines the concept of civic participation and public citi-zenship (Giardina & Denzin, 2011). «Such a critical imagination […] dialogically inserts itself into the world, provoking conflict, curiosity, criticism, and reflection» (Giardina & Denzin, 2011: 322). Ultimately it is about rethinking freedom and de-mocracy itself that we are talking about. This is why it is important to keep in mind that contingency and history play an important role in naturalizing concepts (e.g., race, gender, sex) that operate to value some ways of life and exclude others, and simultaneously give rise to a sense of determinism and hopelessness. But, as Michel Foucault explains (2008 [1979]), while norms are contingent effects of his-torical truth regimes, the impossibility of establishing a stable basis for political practices is at the same time an opportunity for a sort of freedom: the freedom that is formed when people test the limits of the present and look for possibilities for the world to be otherwise. Resistance to domination is integral to life and to the means available for the subject to reconstruct itself, so it cannot be validated by a ready-to-use moral architecture. Hence the important role of the critical imagina-tion, but also that of hope which, «like freedom, is 'an ontological need' […]. Hope is the desire to dream, the desire to change, the desire to improve human exist-ence» (Giardina & Denzin, 2011: 322). It may be highlighted that hope is ethical

because it «gives meaning to the struggles to change the world. Hope is grounded in concrete performative practices, in struggles and interventions that espouse the sacred values of love, care, community, trust, and wellbeing», and finally «confronts the belief that change is not possible or is too costly» (Giardina & Denzin, 2011: 322).

This reflection tries to point out a different reasoning about freedom –a bodily freedom, and its plural form of resisting normalization and determinisms or essentialisms–. In political performativity as dispossession, both public and private spheres intertwine –what is private (for example, what is necessary for the survival of the body) is brought and organized in the public square– and freedom is here instantiated in plural, bodily cohabitation, in resisting by acting, in acting by resisting (Butler & Athanasiou, 2013). Acting and resisting with hope and critical imagination enables a reinterpretation of the present world and seeing the world otherwise, but it also contains a tacit agreement in paying the price of uncertainty. Demonstrating human precariousness and vulnerability as a starting social condition, the protesters «are committed to taking risks, to be willing to act in situations where the outcome cannot be predicted in advance», and in those spaces, «there are no leaders and followers; there are only coparticipants, persons jointly working together to develop new lines of action, new stories, new narratives in a collaborative effort» (Giardina & Denzin, 2011: 322). The plurality of precarious bodies and the absence of hierarchies reinforce notably this conception of *freedom with others*, since it entails the liberation from the violence inscribed in the autocratic will and in the sovereign individual (Butler & Athanasiou, 2013).

This is of paramount importance for reflexive, critic perspectives over political projects that, if they aim to less inequalities and more social justice, must remain open to what and to whom we do not yet know.

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