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AFTER ALL, WHAT DO BABIES WANT?

ABSTRACT

This article intends to discuss the baby as an analytical category based on some of Gilles Deleuze's ideas about difference. It uses the concept of multitude taken up by Antonio Negri, Michael Hardt and Paolo Virno and Fernand Deligny's ideas about acting and willing. From a methodological point of view, we propose mapping in an attempt to trace lines traveled by the babies and over which they move. We also aim at evidencing the forces that seek to act on them. This is a theoretical-conceptual essay that takes place at the intersection of pedagogy, the epistemologies of difference, and the sociology of childhood, in order to contribute to education and Baby Studies in terms of the multitude and multiplicity.

Keywords: Baby Studies. Mapping. Difference, Infancy, Babyhood

AFINAL, O QUE QUEREM OS BEBÊS?

RESUMO

Este artigo visa discutir o bebê como categoria analítica a partir de algumas ideias de Gilles Deleuze sobre a diferença. Utiliza-se o conceito de multidão retomado por Antonio Negri, Michael Hardt e Paolo Virno e as ideias de Fernand Deligny sobre o agir e querer. Do ponto de vista metodológico, propomos a cartografia em um esforço de traçar linhas percorridas pelos bebês e sobre as quais se movimentam. Buscamos também evidenciar as forças as quais buscam atuar sobre eles. Trata-se de um ensaio teórico-conceitual que se produz na intersecção entre a pedagogia, as epistemologias da diferença e a sociologia da infância no sentido de contribuir para a educação e os estudos de bebês na direção da multidão e da multiplicidade.

Palavras-chave: Estudos de bebês. Cartografia. Diferenças. Primeira Infância

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1 INTRODUCTION

This article, in the form of an essay, suggests a look at babies, based on contributions from the epistemologies of difference. We assume, beforehand, that babies are part of society and should be considered in their uniqueness as an analytical category distinct from that of a child, as it has been constructed by baby studies. To do so, we will use the clash between difference and identity, which we will explore in this article, also approaching the debate about people and multitude to highlight the lines of force that seek to govern babies towards the construction of a people. Hence, we aim to offer theoretical subsidies for the construction of new pedagogies for early childhood education as well as for teaching babies, based on difference and multiplicity as principles found in the idea of multitude.

2 BABIES AND DIFFERENCE

In this section we will present a brief bibliographic review of the central concepts that we will mobilize in this article: "Babies" and "Difference", based on the Philosophy of Difference and its critique to the model and identity notions.

The main author we have dialogued with to think about difference is Gilles Deleuze, revisiting a debate he had in the text entitled *Plato and the Simulacrum*. There, Deleuze expresses his criticism to the Platonic philosophy, when it proposes "to distinguish the pure and the impure, the authentic and the inauthentic" (DELEUZE, 2011, p. 260-free translation); "to distinguish the essence and the appearance, the intelligible and the sensitive, the idea and the image, the original and the copy, the model and the simulacrum" (idem, p. 262-free translation).

The excerpts described show the role of the notion of model in Platonic thinking, and it is against this notion that Deleuze will propose a philosophy that defends "the power of the simulacrum" (Ibidem, p. 270, free translation). While the notion of copy strengthens and reaffirms the model by reproducing it, the simulacrum, on the other hand, denies (or ignores) the model, and this would be its great difference-making power. According to Deleuze, the Simulacrum is "built on a disparity, on a difference, it internalizes a dissimilarity. That is why we cannot even define it relating to the model that is imposed on copies" (op.cit, p. 263, free translation). In this sense, the author also states:" The

simulacrum is not a degraded copy, it holds a positive potential which negates both original and copy, both model and reproduction." (DELEUZE, 2011, p. 267, free translation). From this perspective, the concept of a model that guides the construction of the subject is broken.

In general lines, this thought allows us to trace an important reflection on the notions about difference and identity as well as their implications for the Study of Babies. We can relate Identity to the notion of Copy, and Difference to the notion of Simulacrum.

When a baby is born, it ignores its surrounding culture, it is unaware of its models on a general level and of its identity models on a particular level. Its way of existing is marked by this positive power of the simulacrum. A baby, in this sense, brings as singularity the difference. It has the potential and the possibility of making emerge new ways of being and existing, independently of the established models. Alien to the identity that will try to capture them.

In her research on day care centers, the French sociologist Liane Mozère, in dialogue with the works of Michel Foucault, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, also highlights (and criticizes) the role that identity plays in early childhood education, insofar as identity implies conformity and "tends to repress and make invisible every desire that is not restrained in the different social and moral arrangements" (MOZÈRE, 2006, p.115). Thus, she indicates the importance of highlighting what identity hides and disregards, so that we can build, from the critique to identity, other educational approaches and experiences. We could add: build other experiences centered on difference.

The author considers the desire, uniqueness and becoming of each child (MOZÈRE, 2006, p.115) and concludes that:

identity is not responsible for the richness of life. Identity restricts the uniqueness and desire of each child, who is a hybrid efflorescence. Therefore, it must be deconstructed into a re-conceptualization movement that enables everything that social, religious or moral identities try to control and police, allowing desire to develop and proliferate in another way. If children have identities to which they are roughly attributed, they also experience other universes, less stable, more labile, unexpected, and not just preconceived by an Oedipus complex. Shouldn't such a re-conceptualization try to grab this iceberg in an attempt to convert the mind, the vision, by trying a new camera, with new lenses? You will realize that such an approach can transform the so-called adults and the so-called children again into a becoming-child, where the key word is desire and not identity.(MOZÈRE, 2006, p.116 free translation).

Identity carries the concepts of "identical to", model, format, universal, and therefore it is contrary to what we seek to defend for a child education in which the desires, emotions, movements, the "acting", the "willing, the "unwillings1" (DELIGNY, 2007- free translation), and the child's potential are the driving force of pedagogical practice.

Deligny (2007, 2015) distinguishes the terms "acting" and "doing". For him, acting is the gesture or movement without purpose, free from what he calls "thought project" and is associated with circumstances, while "doing" always aims at a goal, and is related to the project, the intention. Acting in Deligny is associated with species, with movement, with potential, with a kind of "unwilling" as Pelbart (2020) points out. Conversely, doing is related to the "man-who-we-are", the civilized subject, stuck to projects, models, identities, the result of a "long domestication process", in the words of Deligny (2007).

In most contemporary Western societies, the prevailing social model is that of the adult, prioritizing a way of being that is characterized by a certain rationality, intelligence, perception and behavior. From this model, children and especially babies can only be understood as representatives of incompleteness, of a quick and passing phase, of irrationality, of error. However, we must think of them as simulacra, because they do not fit into the adult model nor into any other. In a text on *Childhood and Transgression*, inspired by the ideas of Michel Foucault, Chris Jenks states that children transgress models insofar as they "ignore the norms, rules, and conventions of adult society" (JENKS, 2005, p. 122) and " emphasize, once again, the indefatigable, inherent, and infinitely variable human capacity to transgress." (JENKS, 2005, p. 127). Babies, in reality, do not transgress for they do not act in the direction of dismantling a model; they do not "talk" to models, their movements ignore social rules and are guided by "acting" as we will show later.

To talk about babies from the notions of difference and uniqueness means to recognize that the baby participates and interacts with human and non-human elements of society, it meets in a unique and model-free way, once it has not yet been fully subjected to society's norms and standards; it has not been subjected to the countless mechanisms for constructing individuals and subjects, nor to dominant identities. And this is the condition that makes a baby such a powerful and unique being.

In this sense, it is only possible to propose an education for babies from the perspective of the multitude. The baby, even in the singular, suggests a multitude of

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¹ Unwilling refers to what might become willing, a becoming of willing, but that the baby does not know it is able to want, the unwilling is produced by an unexpected, untimely encounter, a kind of unintentionally.

babies because there are many possibilities in their "acting" and movements. Thus, we could hardly (conceptually) define them as a group or a collective, and this could lead us to the idea of a *single people* characterized by its "doings" and by a governability project.

Below, we will see how these terms may (or may not) contribute to the study of babies.

2.1 PEOPLE AND MULTITUDE

"People" and " multitude " are concepts that remind us of the ideas developed by Hobbes and Spinoza and they bring implications to the field in which the debate on education is inserted, since they feature as decisive concepts for the understanding of politics and the public sphere.

According to Galimberti (2015), in Thomas Hobbes' books, the notion of multitude acquired a specific philosophical meaning related to a multitude of dispersed and ruthless individuals, with no rights nor laws, and who needed to have their will reduced to one, by subjecting themselves to a sovereign who would enforce the order, enabling them, therefore, to be a "people". For Hobbes, the constitution of a people and the existence of a government makes it possible to go from a brutal "state of nature" to a humanity condition capable of preserving human lives.

The dialogue with Spinoza, however, allows us to look at the multitude as the true sovereignty. His thinking has inspired authors such as Antonio Negri, Michael Hardt, Paolo Virno, and others. According to Virno (2003), the notion of the people has prevailed over the notion of the multitude, whose concept has been emptied and "lost". No more was said about multitude, Hobbes prevailed over Spinoza. But Negri and Hardt resume the Spinozist perspective, when they state that

"The people is one. The multitude, on the contrary, is multiple. The multitude is made up of innumerable internal differences that could never be reduced to a single unity or identity - different cultures, races, ethnic groups, genders, and sexual orientations; different ways of working; different ways of living; different worldviews; and different desires. The multitude is a multiplicity of all these unique differences." (HARDT AND NEGRI, 2005, p. 12-free translation).

In this sense, an education "from difference" must be addressed to the multitude, and no longer to a people, as Abramowicz, Levcovitz, and Rodrigues (2009) point out.

We know what it means to live under the aegis of the concept of a people and have education be the basis for its construction. The idea of people generates consequences,

such as State, Nation-State, centralized State, territory, hegemonic language, race, etc. It moves, therefore, toward the production of the one. According to Agamben (2002), it is the falling of the ancient regime, of the monarchic reign, that marks the birth of the Nation State, when the principle of nativity is merged with the principle of sovereignty: previously, birth originated the subject, now it originates a citizen, who will be bonded to the sovereign body. In other words, the borders of the Nation-State also start delimiting the bodies of those who are born there under the inscription of nationality. The problem with the Nation-State idea is that it produces a biopolitics that both needs the people as well as operates on the separation of lives. According to Foucault (1999), biopolitics has inserted racism into the mechanisms of state operation. Thus, along with population management, State racism emerges and becomes a technique of power: "This is the first function of racism: to fragment, to make gaps in the biological continuum that biopower is aimed at" (FOUCAULT, 1999, p.305- free translation). And education acts actively in the direction of this biopolitics.

The education that supports and contributes to the formation of the people is based on centrality, homogeneity, and the adoption of educational models that are more appropriate for this production. As already indicated by Abramowicz, Levcovitz, and Rodrigues (2009, p.181- free translation):

The teachers of young children's schools, who build and promote childhood practices, work from the perspective of a certain care and education oriented by habits of caring and educating that are established in hegemonic ways and models of acting. Eating with the mouth closed, being quiet at meals, bathing in a certain way, combing and fixing the messy hair, for example, are lessons embedded in a certain hegemonic model of habits and behavior production, which aims to produce people and individuals who constitute themselves as a people.

Often, from a very early age, we attempt through our actions to make babies into members of the people: a model, a language, a color, a way of life, a universal, a gender. In this way, we transform their actions into doings, their unwillings into willings (DELIGNY, 2007, 2015), since there is a constant concern in schools to implement a "project", which is usually absolutely unrelated and useless to babies and children. Nevertheless, there is another way of thinking that is not necessarily a " wooing of senses", it is an art of living that perhaps doesn't want anything.

2.2 THE BABIES, ACTING, WILLING, AND THEIR LINES OF WANDERING: DIALOGUES WITH DELIGNY.

Babies sometimes do not want anything, just the movement, and it is in this particular baby condition that the unwilling is possible, purposeless movements, lines of wandering. Lines that are the mark of the multitude and not the mark of the people. A people has project, has culture and customary lines; a crowd, on the other hand, has singularities, differences, lines of wandering, the latter being a central term in Deligny's work and one that can contribute much to Baby Studies (Tebet and Abramowicz, 2018; Tebet and Impedovo, 2019- free translation).

The term wandering in Deligny's work is directly associated to the concept of acting. The expression originally used by the author is "Lignes d'erre", where the term "erre" in French is not related to a mistake (antonym of correct), but to the movement of wandering, of moving aimlessly, without a goal, without a project. This is the meaning of the word "erre" in the term "Lignes de erre". The word error, in French, is represented by the term "erreur", which is not the one Deligny used. Translated into English, the term "Wander lines" was adopted, and in Portuguese it has been adopted the term "Linha de Errância", in which *errância* is associated to a " wandering" path, meaning one that wanders aimlessly. It is rather a line of wandering than a line of error, since by giving up the thought project, of a model defined in advance, the very notion of error does not fit in Deligny's thought.

To think of the baby in the theoretical field of difference and multitude is to think of the baby beyond the two models: adult and child. It is not to think of the baby as an incomplete being, either in formation or in development. It implies recognizing a unique way of existing that does not relate to models. A way of existing that blurs all models, and whose movement, relying on Deligny's key, we will call acting. Fernand Deligny (2007), when working with autistic children, said that they "act" and do not "do", acting is the opposite of doing that seeks an objective.

His philosophy inspired a very peculiar way of working with children (whether with the autistic ones or, before that, in the Observation and Screening Center that attended children considered "Misfit). His proposition was not to correct them, to insert them into a predefined model of existence. Instead, it set up a space for coexistence that allowed children to exist, each one with their own peculiarities. To this end, the adults assumed the role of close presences, who lived with the children, but did not impose a common project

on all of them. They were "effective wanderers" who allowed, watched (observed), and recorded their actions. "Creators of circumstances" (DELIGNY, 2018, p. 126).

It is true that, with our menu of meanings, whether as researchers or teachers, we trigger, within language, meanings for actions and we suggest doings. We conceive (pedagogical) projects. We transform actions into doings. Pedagogies are always compositions of meanings mediated by adults to reach the child and/or the babies: their learning, their behavior, their development, their way of being, their subjectivity. Babies are putting their own language into tension all the time, going beyond and experimenting the limits and expanding the possible through their bodies, their actions, their art, their philosophy, and their movements. We do not understand, neither do we have this language.

Babies are not part of a collective where they share common interests and values. There may even be ephemeral situations in which interests are shared, but it is not usual for it to be something more constant. Among babies, it is about existing, moving, managing, acting, relating in unique ways to the world, things, and people. It is not about sharing values and concerns.

In this sense of moving through their unwillings, the idea of multitude works much better than the one of a people (ABRAMOWICZ, LEVCOVITZ and RODRIGUES, 2009), to conceive an education for babies. When we consider babies in the activities at daycare centers, it makes more sense to talk about placing infants in the perspective of forming a multitude, therefore a multiplicity, rather than a people. To understand the way in which education helps in the construction of civilizing processes, especially for young children, it is necessary to understand what it means to collaborate and be at the service of the construction of the idea of people, race and nation. Discussing difference as an educational practice necessarily implies building a concept that contrasts with that of the people, such as the concept of multitude re-elaborated by Michael Hardt, Antonio Negri and Paolo Virno as well as Deligny's notion of Wandering. And we understand that the baby as an analytical category (and conceptual character) is the image of the multitude. It is the wandering movement that breaks with chronos time. By tracking babies, what we find are lines of intensity and difference that are traced in Aion time.

2.3 AION: THE TIME OF BABIES' EXPERIENCE AND MOVEMENT

We can say that babies move in the untimely time, in the *Kairós* and *Aion* time, which is the time of experience, of happening and of intensity. Deleuze establishes a distinction between the time of *Kronos* and *Aion*. For him, "according to Chronos, only the present exists in time" (DELEUZE, 2011, p.167), where past and future are two relations relative to the present.

Aion is the temporal structure behind every construction in time, it is the child who plays and who does not submit to the logic of the mechanisms. In chronos dimension, the baby experiences childhood as a first stage of the historical time of his or her life - as it suits chronos. The baby in making experiences, experimentations, and movements inhabits a childhood in the perspective of an aion or kairós time. A childhood in aion, kairos time and in intempestive time (as consecrated by Deleuze based on Nietsche) is the emergence of a destabilizing difference in the existing forms.

Aion is related to "the instant without thickness and without extension, which subdivides each present into past and future" (DELEUZE, 2011, p. 169), it is "the locus of incorporeal events and attributes which are distinct from qualities." (idem, p.170- free translation). It is about childhood as experience, not as generation. Deleuze further states that Aion is "the present of the actor, the dancer, or the mime" (ibid., p. 172-73). As Walter Kohan explains it:

An intriguing fragment from Heraclitus (DK 22 B 52) connects this temporal word to both power and childhood. He says that "aión is a child who plays (literally, " toddling"), its kingdom is that of a child, childlike." There is a double relationship stated there: time-infancy (aión - paîs) and power-infancy (basileíe - paîs). This fragment seems to indicate, among other things, that the time of life is not just a matter of numbered movement, and that this other temporal way of being can be thought as a childish, childlike way of being. If one temporal logic - that of chronos - follows the numbers, the other one - that of aion - plays with the numbers and infantilizes the movement (KOHAN, 2004, p.3).

3 MAPPING MAKES BABIES VISIBLE

The mapping perspective inspired by Deligny (2015) in research with babies aims to follow the babies' movements and emotions. We defend the idea that mapping can offer us conditions to make visible the babies, their actions, and the lines they draw on a daily basis, which are often not noticed by adults. Mapping is understood here as an epistemological and methodological tool that allows us to surpass the image that babies only sleep, nurse, and evacuate, or the perspective that they do not do anything. They have minimum existences in the perspective proposed by Sourriau (cited by Lapoujade,

2017). Sourriau elaborates on minority lives that lack reality, but have potentiality. Existences that struggle to exist, as an art of being. Mapping, somehow, illuminates this art of being, it allows us to see traces of the babies' lives from the careful observation of the actions produced by them and by other agents and mechanisms that capture their flows of desires and movements. It allows us to trace the networks that babies participate in and how the common is produced in everyday relationships.

4 THE DAY CARE CENTERS AND THE PEOPLE'S PRODUCTION PROCESS.

In his well-known text "The Nursery Schools and Initiation", Felix Guattari points out that

In pre-industrial societies, the child's entry into the roles specified by the adult social field is around 9-12 years of age. Until then, the child does not need to strictly respect the group's prohibitions. Only when promoted to the title of 'whole person,' a member of the clan, must he or she bend to the group norms (GUATTARI, 1987, p.50- free translation).

The author also makes a remark about babies when he states that there is a specificity in the relationship of the person with the group until the age of two, when there is a territorial limitation, restricted to the mother's adjacencies. For him, "in developed industrial societies, this whole organization of age groups seems to have disappeared: it is as if it were from the infants stage that the initiation process would begin" (idem) and day care centers, in modern societies, would have an important role in the initiation and adaptation of babies and children to the knowledge and values of capitalism. They need to be produced as "people" from a very early age in order to be governed and to serve the interests of capitalism. This is the initiation that day care centers offer.

There are many concepts that need to be revisited when we propose to think about an education for difference and multitude, among them, the concept of generation. In this sense, it is important to consider Mannheim's (1982) writings on "Generation", "Generational Connections", and "Generational Units", which can bring significant elements to this debate. The studying of these concepts allows us to think that infants' childhood exists as a generation, only as a potentiality, and never as a concrete reality. This means that babies' childhood is never materialized as a generational connection nor as a Generational Unit (a Children's People), whereas when babies perceive themselves as part of a generational collective and assume this identity, they are no longer babies but

children. The generational connection or the generational unit created in this case does not concern the babies. However, even in the condition of potentiality, the babies' infancy can be studied as a discourse that guides practices, defines spaces, and has a number of other implications for babies' lives. These are lines of force operating against the force of the multitude and that aim to transform the babies into a people by attributing them a common identity, something that can be observed, for example, in the following account by Mozère:

Working in nursery schools and kindergartens, it soon becomes apparent that kindergarten teachers have particular views about the children who come from nursery school: they should be autonomous, but also undisciplined and peer-directed. This social construction of a daycare child's identity is generally taken for granted (or incorporated) by daycare teachers, but it does not necessarily fit this or that child, who may play another role. (MOZÈRE, 2006, p.110- free translation)

If in former research we have stated that babies cannot be studied as a generation in terms of a collectivity, it is precisely because they do not constitute themselves as a people. Babies are the difference in concreteness, the singularity, the "multitude".

5 CONSIDERATIONS REGARDING AN EDUCATION FOR THE MULTITUDE

Babies challenge the theoretical field of the sociology of childhood itself, they are not children, not even small or little children, they are babies and require their own methodologies and epistemologies. They are demanding. There is a whole art of living, a philosophy of their own, very difficult to diagram. When a child says: "I'm not a baby anymore", he or she has understood from an early age that being a baby is not being a child, it is to be something else. There is in our society a social status of the baby and another social status, the one of the child. A baby has for itself a thousand worlds, all worlds, it experiences them in a unique way, with its hands, its crawling bodies, its mouth, it carries out meaningful and meaningless encounters, it acts and wants (things, objects, people, sensations, etc.) and also unwill, which is a willing without a previously constituted meaning, a non-willing.

This is not about producing new buzzwords, or a new educational concept for babies. The effort of the article was to try to abandon the binary models: adult X child, identity X difference, because we want to reach what babies bring in potential: a thousand

forms of existing and the very art of life. We could use the chrysalis metaphor, which can spring up and fly away, or not.

The problem with education and pedagogy is that they reduce the child, the baby to a model, the model of a body in the sense of a people: a language, a gender, a skin color, a standard, a morality, and from this point on, they activate the mechanisms of power over the body, over sexuality, over the thought and imagination of children and babies in the sense of individuating them. The pedagogy of early childhood education cannot stand the difference that is expressed in the lines of wandering produced by babies. Against these lines of wandering, pedagogy produces lines of capture (as Bridges shows, 2020). Pedagogy operates to transform acts into doings, it operates language as a restricted tool that imposes places: this or that, man or woman, child or adult, black or white, heterosexual or homosexual. What binarism erases is precisely the multiplicities, the thousand possible sexualities, the thousand languages, the thousand possibilities of existence. Babies move, produce encounters with things, with the world, and with objects, and we must not make these movements, these flows produced by the babies' actions, become hardened into models of existence, into means of constructing individuals and subjects.

We suggest that they can have experiences and we can follow them, without knowing where to go. Perhaps we may learn with them to inhabit this aion-playing and art time and we may free ourselves a little from the chronos restraints imposed by stiffened routines. Maybe by following the babies we may allow ourselves to revisit childhood. After all, as Kohan (2004) says based on Mia Couto: "childhood is when it is not too late to invent, create, and live.

Babies' teacher could follow more, listen and see more, and prescribe less. There is always a project of nation (and people) embedded in pedagogies. Hence, the relationships established go in the way of the social contract, which prescribes and indicates the place to occupy in society. In the multitude everything escapes and slips away. To be different is to be able to experience places, without being pushed neither into deviation nor into the norm. The new world embedded in pedagogies asks nothing from children, even less from babies. Babies do not form groups, but they can be part of collectives. They may or may not influence one another, they may or may not identify with one another, they act, they are the very potency of acting. There is another aesthetic, another bond that only emerges in a multitudinal scenario guided by multiplicities, itinerancies, and nomadism. In another article we have already asked ourselves:

How can one create and produce a space outside of the ties of meaning, of the idea of childhood/people, a kind of out-of-childhood space, a wide band, a larger margin, that one never knows exactly where it will lead, where children/babies can be alone, think, grunt, talk, etc.? (Abramowicz e Rodrigues, 2014, p. 471-742- free translation)

If one wants to promote difference, it is because it is there and it must make its political potential count, it must be removed from the place of the odd, the dreadful, and the aberration. But not in a movement of conversion into profit for capital, which has been able to remove from them what is unique and perhaps ultimate, which are their potential and their life. The difference needs to be removed from the scene where it was desecrated in order to be replaced in the multitude, where the landscape is undefined, where it is not known exactly who is who and what is what, especially because it is nomadic: those who were there are no longer there, those who arrived have already left.

Finally, to conclude with some inspirations for those working with babies, we bring Deligny's (2018) idea that:

The exasperation of people hurt by intolerably dishonest social conditions and the impatience of children oppressed by unwieldy adults express themselves through the same signals.

When the people are freed and dare to walk on their own feet, the work of art will come to them in familiar shapes, colors, and music.

It will be necessary, please, to simultaneously set the children free and place them with educators of gentle presence, provocateurs of joy, always ready to remodel balls of clay, effective wanderers amazed by childhood.

Hope. (DELIGNY, 2018, p. 130- free translation)

And we revisit the question that is the title of this text: After all, what do babies want? Freedom to act and experience the world with no course nor project. They want the expansion of life, existing, and the art of living in difference. As a multitude and not as a people.

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