

In human intercourse the tragedy begins, not when there is misunderstanding about words, but when silence is not understood. – Henry David Thoreau

Introduction: Recognition, Speech, and Silence

Theorists of recognition have argued that the acknowledgment or affirmation of one's universal and particular position in the world is a vital human need and that *non-* or *mis-*recognition inflicts real psychological harm (Taylor 1994; Honneth 1995). Governments and dominant communities have become very interested in responding to demands for recognition by providing remedial rights, restitution, and reparations. The main problem we have encountered is that identities and needs are not fixed or stable, which makes the aim of these practices of recognition seem impracticable or even dangerous. It is suggested that identities and needs are negotiated in ongoing and unstable processes of disclosure and acknowledgment with others (Tully 1995, 2008a, 2008b). Multicultural and multinational democracies, being institutionally ill-equipped to attend to horizons of identity that continually take on new complexions and new topographies, are accordingly consigned to navigate a political terrain of culture and identity that does not admit of many clear paths or boundaries.

We are fortunate that in most cases we have shared understandings with others. There are common grounds upon which we can meet and negotiate demands for and over recognition – the conditions of inclusion and acknowledgment – within and between communities, though we cannot predict with any certainty that we will be standing in a space of mutual intelligibility, respect, and equality. As James Tully (2008a) has argued with reference to the terrain shared by aboriginal and non-aboriginal communities, such spaces are often “shot through with relations of inequality, force and fraud, broken promises, failed accords, degrading stereotypes, misrecognition, paternalism, enmity and distrust” (240). For most indigenous communities the politics of recognition is fraught with dangers.

Still many have argued that the struggle is itself productive and should not be abandoned. Jocelyn Maclure (2003) has argued that we are better served in acknowledging that “the reflexive practices of articulating the unfairness or unacceptability of a given form of recognition, of deliberating about it, and of competing for an alternative description in a public space are, in themselves, means of enhancing self-knowledge, self-respect and self-esteem.” Moreover, “listening to alternative perspectives and worldviews helps us see the perspectival, rather than comprehensive, character of our own position and is likely to lead to the ideal of role taking and decentred vision of the world discussed by Jürgen Habermas” (7). Thus, “competition with others increases one's capabilities and deliberation enables one to become more intelligible to oneself,” such that “an agonistic mode of being-with-others intensifies one's capacity for dispelling the *ressentiment* fueled by a demeaning or distorting form of recognition.” It is hoped that this channelling of energies into the struggle for recognition will “prevent the conversion of this anger into private aggressiveness and violence” (8).

There has always been a strong deliberative component in western theories of recognition inasmuch as the substance of acknowledgment and disclosure (or however

we conceptualize it) is realized primarily by listening to and making claims in an incomplete and imperfect public exchange of reasons, witnessing, and narrative. Such conceptions of the negotiation require that we speak and be heard. The absence of speech represents a political silence, an exclusion, a loss of ‘voice’ and of self that can only be overcome by (re)gaining the ability to speak and becoming visible in the public domain. We have inherited a view of inclusion and democratic legitimacy that focuses on *voice* through which we are held to represent ourselves, promote our interests, tell our stories, authorize, hold accountable, and dissent in political life. In the idiom of modern democracy, to be marginalized and excluded is therefore to be silenced, to be robbed of one’s *voice*, and to be denied the very possibility of gaining let alone struggling for recognition.

The basis of this deliberative model of recognition has gone unchallenged for the most part, though theorists of recognition such as Arto Laitinen (2006) have observed that linguistic interaction should not be seen as exhaustive of the process. Laitinen argues that a genuinely mutual and transformative recognition requires the appropriate attitudes, expressions, and actions to accompany speech: “Mere actions and expressions without corresponding attitudes seem mere pretence of recognition, and mere attitudes without corresponding action do not seem sincere either. Furthermore, attitudes without expressions (at least implicitly in body-language or tone of voice) are not accessible to others, who thus cannot ‘get recognition’ (49). The extra-linguistic modes of recognition are captured by Honneth in his adaptation of the tripartite Hegelian scheme of recognition.

The experiences of some groups suggest that deliberation with dominant groups is not part of a solution but part of the problem. Feminist scholar Rae Langton (1993) has identified two ways that groups can be excluded:

If you are powerful, you sometimes have the ability to silence the speech of the powerless. One way might be to stop the powerless from speaking at all. Gag them, threaten them, condemn them to solitary confinement. But there is another, less dramatic but equally effective, way. Let them speak. Let them say whatever they like to whomever they like, but stop that speech from counting as an *action*. More precisely, stop it from counting as the action it was intended to be (299).

The goal is “to prevent them from satisfying the felicity conditions for some illocutions they might want to perform” (319-20). At its worst it works “not simply by depriving speech of its intended illocutionary force, but by replacing it with a force that is its antithesis” (326). What this means for many communities is that talk is not cheap, indeed it has cost some almost everything.

It is this history of cost which has led indigenous scholar Glen Coulthard (2007) to argue in his article “Subjects of Empire,” that the domination of indigenous peoples is sustained through “the profoundly *asymmetrical* and *non-reciprocal* forms of recognition either imposed on or granted to them by the colonial-state and society” (439). Coulthard argues that “the contemporary politics of recognition promises to reproduce the very configurations of colonial power that Indigenous demands for recognition have

historically sought to transcend” (437). This relationship continues to poison mutuality and destroy the possibility of a what Tully (2008a) calls “a shared life” among equals (241). For Coulthard, the deliberative machinery of recognition represents, as we saw with Langton, an exchange wherein speech ensnares and deepens relations of domination, with the call for more inclusive, richer, and reciprocal forms of deliberation inviting their further entrenchment. Whereas many groups cite speech as the very mode of subjugation, anxious western theorists see the call for a constructive silence between the parties as a retreat from the political domain. The absence of political speech is a void or negation of politics, and inducement to conflict and violence.

In this paper I explore the positive role of *silence* in the politics of recognition. But by *silence* I mean more than just the absence of speech, language, or symbol. Silence, I want to argue, is a frame or structure of being-with-others within which we are present and intelligible as embodied beings whether or not we are speaking. As Max Picard (1952) notes in his poetic treatise *The World of Silence*: “Silence is not simply what happens when we stop talking. It is more than the mere negative renunciation of language” (xix). I wish to follow Picard in granting that “Silence belongs to the basic structure of man” (xix), and as such “Silence is the firstborn of basic phenomena,” which “envelops the other basic phenomena – love, loyalty, and death” (5).

It is in this spirit which I present *silence* as a field of ethico-political relations and actions, *deeds*, between citizens that do not owe their substance or structure to the verbal or symbolic exchange of reasons and accounts. Here I have in mind those convivial activities that involve both joint intentions and joint commitments including practices of greeting, acknowledging, apologizing, gifting, grieving, consoling, rejoicing, playing, travelling, eating, and labouring together. I will refer to rudimentary forms of these practices or *deeds* as iconic, prototypical, or archetypal to distinguish them from those practices which require more than just a record of bodily interaction to understand. Here I follow Wittgenstein (1981), who argues that:

Being sure that someone is in pain, doubting whether he is, and so on, are so many natural, instinctive, kinds of behaviour towards other human beings, and our language is merely auxiliary to, and further extension of, this relation. Our language-game is an extension of primitive behaviour. (For our *language-game* is behaviour.) (Instinct) (Z §545).

But what is the word “primitive” meant to say here? Presumably that this sort of behaviour is *pre-linguistic*: that a language-game is based on it, that it is a prototype of a way of thinking and not the result of thought (Z §541).

Any logic good enough for a primitive means of communication needs no apology from us. Language did not emerge from some kind of ratiocination” (OC §475).

I thus distinguish *silent* convivial deeds from the linguistic and symbolic language-games they generate, between ‘embodied’ meanings immanent in a corporeal and affective form of life on the one hand, and secondary linguistic meanings of symbolic life which require a theory or model of inference on the other.

From this starting point I wish to make two strong arguments for the conclusion that *silence* is the principal medium of recognition and it is stymied by a preoccupation with speech or *voice* in political theory and practice. First, contrary to the hermeneutic political ontologies which take language as constitutive of being and meaning, I wish to argue that conditions of democratic trust, negotiation, compromise, and recognition emerge from and are met within the field of non-deliberative ethical relations, or *silence*, even when conducted through speech. For if we take Wittgenstein's example seriously we see that political speech is but a linguistic emulation of otherwise *silent* embodied practices. Greeting words come out of greeting practices, and are always linked to these practices even where they appear to take on a life of their own.

In contrast Wittgenstein (1991), who suggests that the meaning of the word displaces the original meaning of the practices, for example, as when "the verbal expression of pain replaces crying" (§244), I would offer that speech never fully colonizes the bodily intelligibility upon which it is dependent. As developmental psychologist Daniel Stern (1990) writes, the introduction of linguistic meaning does not entail the forgetting of all other meaning, it simply means that we are now in possession of "two different versions of the same event." From the moment speech emerges out of an existing practice "the verbal and the nonverbal constructions of experience will live together," such that life is lived "more in parallel" (114). But parallel does not mean coeval or equiprimordial, for the veracity of speech is always held up to the standard of its respective practice (Zahavi 2007b).

This is why, as Erik Kramer (2004) observes in "The Body in Communication": "When nonverbal messages contradict verbal ones, we *trust* the nonverbal ones more" (65), and as Barbara Korte (1998) writes in *Body Language in Literature*, the body "can either complement, replace, or contradict a spoken message" (27). Even the ancient Athenians understood that the final measure of speech (*logos*) was always its authentication through the deed (*ergon*) (Balot 2005, 120-1). And finally the great theorist of the felicitous speech acts J.L. Austin (1975) observes in *How to Do Things with Words* the truism: "it is hardly a gift if I *say* 'I give it to you' but never hand it over" (9). Indeed (incidentally, from the Middle English expression '*in deed*'), a gifting is much less ambiguous when one places something in the hands of another while kneeling or bowing in silence.

All of this is to highlight the point that political speech emerges as an articulation of an already rich form of ethical life, and is therefore itself ethical. Simply put, discursive or communicative ethics gains its normative force from expectations rooted not in speech *per se* but speech as a modality of ethical conduct. To put it in Levinasian terms, speech is a gift of *saying* that is fundamentally distinct from and prior to the propositional or practical meaning of what is *said*. *Saying* is for Levinas (1981) the form that ethical relations take in the physical act of linguistic exchange, the presence of the bodily other. Kramer (2004) observes that for Levinas speech compels a normative stance insofar as it is an "obligation rooted in physical presence" (68). On such an account "the body constitutes the preconceptual agreement that enables linguistic conventionalism.

Embodied awaring constitutes a prelinguistic field of communication: a field of shared sense, shared desires, fears, drives, and anticipations that emerge out of the structure of our bodies and the way our senses open the world to us” (69). Speaking on Nietzsche, Kramer writes that “the abstraction of linguistic communication enables dissociative reflection,” but it is also true that “cohesive behaviour, which enables linguisticity itself, is manifested in prelinguistic bodily structure, interaction, and attunement” (70). Speech, if it is to be ethical and by extension political, is necessarily a bodily mode of intersubjectivity. Speech has its power by virtue of the power of bodily presence which is immutably ethical.

Because it emerges from an ethical relation as a modality of an ethical relation, speech cannot but preserve its ethical origins in corporeal presence. As Drew Leder (1990) explains in *The Absent Body*, the “mutuality never fully disappears, not even in the most objectifying encounter” (95). In terms of speech act theory we could say that every utterance possesses an ethical force in its very locution prior to and parallel with its illocutionary and perlocutionary force. In their edited volume *Perspectives on Silence*, Saville-Troike and Tannen (1985) argue that “silent communicative acts may be analyzed as having both illocutionary force and perlocutionary effect, although here we clearly cannot use ‘locution’ in its usual sense” (6). Locution in speech act theory is the verbal analogy of embodied action. Cultural anthropologist Susan Philips (1985) observes in the same volume that “wherever and whenever people have visual access to one another, they acquire information from one another’s nonverbal behaviour. Thus, whenever there is silence in such circumstances, there will still always be nonverbal behaviour that constitutes the organization of face-to-face interaction” (205).

Philips argues that we can differentiate between two modes of interaction: those structured by talk, and those structured by silence. Talk-structured interaction has clear examples in practices of deliberation, claim-making, reason-giving, and story-telling, where speech is the primary means to mutual understanding. Silence structured interactions are of the sort described above. Practices of ‘greeting’ may or may not include moments of talk, but the primary medium of understanding is the expressive movement, positioning, and placing of one’s body, in what Edward Hall famously termed the ‘silent language’ of human interaction. Edward Hall (1973) observes that most westerners “are only dimly aware of this silent language even though they use it everyday” (10). As we saw with bodies we also see with silence. Philips concludes that “silence is not a gap in structure, but structure itself in the organization of interaction” (210). The omnipresence of silence as a structure of ethical relations allows it to be overlooked:

The first and most fundamental feature of talk in interaction structured through silence is that its comprehensibility depends on the visual [we might add tactile, olfactory, and auditory] access to the non-verbal context, rather than on access to prior discourse, as in interaction structured through talk. In other words, one cannot understand what is being said without seeing what is going on, and utterances lack the interdependence one finds in interaction structure through talk. Instead the utterances are dependent on non-verbal context (210).

The politics of recognition is therefore comprised of bodily citizens in multilogues founded in the peace of *silence*. Political speech emerges from and always seeks to return to non-deliberative ethical relations, to peace. In his article “The theory of silences,” psychologist Sidney Baker (1955) argues that the “underlying (i.e., unconscious and unpremeditated) aim of speech is not continued flow of speech, but *silence*” (161). Picard echoes this: “Speech must remain in relationship with the silence from which it raised itself up,” so that “in goodness speech returns to its origin” (21).

Speech and Action

The history of the western privileging of speech in the political sphere is captured in Hannah Arendt’s (1958) writing on freedom and agency in *The Human Condition*. Calling on Greek conceptions of the political, Arendt observes that there were two activities characterizing Aristotle’s *bios politikos*: action (*praxis*) and speech (*lexis*), taken to be “coeval and coequal, of the same rank and the same kind” (26). It is through speech and action that citizens of the polis attended to communal (*koinon*) affairs, not the private (*idion*) affairs of their households. But the distinction between *lexis* and *praxis* would be collapsed in the classic and Arendtian frameworks. Arendt claims that despite the coequal nature of speech and action it remains clear that “most political action, insofar as it remains outside the sphere of violence, is indeed transacted in words,” and still further that “finding the right words at the right moment, quite apart from the information of the communication they may convey, *is action*” (my emphasis 26). Speech, then, is the action by which citizens are made intelligible in political matters. As Arendt puts it, “the disclosure of who somebody is, is implicit in both his words and his deeds; yet obviously the affinity between speech and revelation is much closer than that between action and revelation” (178).

Yet it is far from “obvious” that we should adopt this subordination of embodied action to speech in terms of revelatory or communicative power. Indeed, one might reasonably conclude that the disclosure of the particularity of a human being is revealed most clearly in their actions. This is why we say ‘actions speak louder than words’, for it is the deed which we take to reveal the intentions, character, choices, etc, of the other. There is of course the more general argument that the meaning of action is embedded in a field of discourse. The politics of recognition is a web of interdependent meanings that form the context wherein actions become intelligible. In the Arendtian view this means that language is a backdrop against which all action is potentially explained or justified. Action without speech is simply not political action worthy of a citizen. As in Socrates’ demand of his interlocutor “Speak so that I may see you,” Arendt holds that being visible to others in the political sphere requires speech. She famously writes that without it

action would not only lose its revelatory character, but, and by the same token, it would lose its subject, as it were; not acting men but performing robots would achieve what, humanly speaking, would remain incomprehensible. Speechless action would no longer be action because there would no longer be an actor, and the actor, the doer of deeds, is possible only if he is at the same time the speaker of words. The action he begins is humanly disclosed by the word, and though his deed can be perceived in its brute physical appearance without verbal

accompaniment, it becomes relevant only through the spoken word in which he identifies himself as the actor, announcing what he does, has done, and intends to do (*HC* 178-9).

The silent movement of bodies can only be perceived in their brute physical appearance. To that end, Arendt adds that “No other human performance requires speech to the same extent as action. In all non-political venues speech is subordinate to “something that could also be achieved in silence” (179). Arendt’s adaptation of the ancient privileging of speech represents a more or less standard political ontology in contemporary democratic theory. Both strict deliberative democrats and their agonistic critics espouse the inviolability of speech and symbol in defining the political realm and the activities of the citizen.

I would like to suggest that the possibilities of democratic justice and the prescriptions for democratic institutions change dramatically if we assume a different ontology as our starting point, specifically one that does not hold webs of discourse to be constitutive or exhaustive of negotiations over meaning and justice. On the standard account, as Gadamer (1989) and others in the hermeneutic and post-structuralist traditions have asserted, embodied action is a silent performance of linguistic meaning; a corporeal text to be interpreted according to shared symbolic conventions. A new ontology might be necessary, however, since at some level the linguistic model assumes precisely what it seeks to explain: the intelligibility of embodied human action. In order for speech and language to describe, mark out, refer to, or differentiate a world, at some level our being-in-the-world and being-with-others must prove intelligible in the primordial silence of bodies in coordinative and communicative relation. Speech and symbol did not arise *ex nihilo*. Rather, as Wittgenstein has illustrated, meaning emerges out of forms of life.

When we assume that linguistic meaning is already on the scene we incur what have been called the transduction and grounding problems of language; that is, the problem of how and why a word would ever have emerged in the first place. M.C. Dillon (1998) comments that the linguistic turn does not give us a coherent picture of ethical life for it

errs insofar as it construes language as the ultimate ground and refuses to take up the question of its own origins and grounds. Indeed, the current deification of language – that is, commitment to take language as the *sui generis* origin of meaning – effectively precludes resolving the immanence-transcendence bifurcation, perpetuates dualism, and leaves language ensnared in the domain of immanence (130).

Likewise, in his book *The Origins of Human Communication*, developmental psychologist Michael Tomasello (2008) has echoed Wittgenstein in urging that if we want to understand human intersubjectivity “we cannot begin with language” (59), for the simple fact that ethical life “could not have originated with a code, since this would assume what it attempts to explain...[E]stablishing an explicit code requires some preexisting form of communication that is at least as rich as that code” (58). Much like Wittgenstein, Tomasello argues that it is only in the context of inherently meaningful

collaborative activities coordinated by “natural forms of communication” that our “arbitrary linguistic conventions could have come into existence” (327-8). Speech is a collaborative activity which builds upon non-linguistic or *silent* collaborative activities (Sheets-Johnstone 1999). In “Understanding and sharing intentions: The origins of cultural cognition,” Tomasello *et al.* (2005) write that

Interactions of this type require not only an understanding of the goals, intentions, and perceptions of other persons, but also, in addition, a motivation to share these things in interaction with others – and perhaps special forms of dialogic cognitive representation for doing so. The motivations and skills for participating in this kind of “we” intentionality are woven into the earliest stages of human ontogeny and underlie young children’s developing ability to participate in the collectivity that is human cognition (676).

The medium of understanding in practices of ‘shared intentionality’ is neither verbal nor symbolic but a kind of iconic rather than symbolic ‘protoconversation’ which takes place on the register of emotional intersubjectivity: “*Protoconversations* require not only that the two interactants understand each other as animate agents, but also that they have a special motivation and capacity to share emotions with each other” (682). As we shall see later, Wittgenstein called these activities ‘prototypes’ of thought, and Tully (2008) refers to them as ‘proto-citizenship’.

I will not say anything here about any particular metaphysic that may structure silent human relations, I will only say that *silence* has received very little attention in the history of western philosophy. The Greeks associated it with philosophical activity, the *vita contemplativa*. Early Gnostic sects of Christianity believed that the essence and presence of God was not found in *logos*, the word, but rather in *sige*, or silence. The theme of silence as a presence was largely forsaken, however, when the Roman Empire chose orthodox Christianity as the state religion, thereby blessing the political and philosophical marriage of speech and divinity. Certain forms of monastic quietude notwithstanding, silence would become conceptually linked with either the sublime and ineffable or the vulgar necessity of the material world and the physiological body.

Today the silent body remains a standard trope in political theory in general and democratic theory more specifically. Again, Arendt provides a representative illustration. In a feminist interpretation of Arendtian thought, Bonnie Honig (1995) writes about the Arendtian distinction between the social and political respectively as “the space of the mute body and that of the speaking subject” (175-76). Honig observes that for Arendt the body is “a site and source of mute inaction, cyclical nature, or senseless violence that ought to be confined to the private realm” (7). The silent body is thus the absence and negation of freedom, agency and the political.

If we undertake a silence-based depiction of social relations these modern adaptations of Greek logocentrism suggest a mistake akin to what William James termed the ‘psychological fallacy’ and John Dewey the ‘philosophic fallacy’: the reading back of discrete intellectual categories into the flow of lived experience and the gestalt of perception. Heidegger (1996) argued in *Being and Time*, we do not conceptualize our

way through a doorway, we simply negotiate our through it with a bodily know-how that adjusts to the environment. To describe the action as the work of a calculating subject dealing with an objective world is to intellectualize action after the fact. Perhaps we might now refer to a ‘discursive fallacy’ symptomatic of a foundational philosophical commitment to *logos* understood not simply in terms of reason and speech, as in the *classical* Greek use, but also by the *archaic* Greek use of *logos* to denote an accounting of something, a narrative (Mortley 1986) . In the discursive fallacy we struggle to read language and symbol back into the silent and intelligible affective field of human sociality and intersubjectivity from which it grew (Arthur et al 2005; Turner 2000, 2002; Stern 1985; Sheets-Johnstone 1994; Zahavi 2007a, 2007b). It rarely works. As Katz (1999) argues in *How Emotions Work*:

Studies almost always end up analysing how people talk about their emotions. If there is anything distinctive about emotions, it is that, even if they commonly occur in the course of speaking, they are not talk, not even just forms of expression, they are ways of expressing something going on that talk cannot grasp. Historical and cultural studies similarly elide the challenge of understanding emotional experience when they analyse texts, symbols, material objects, and ways of life as representations of emotions (322).

Such an approach has implications for conceiving of the politics of recognition. Free and equal citizens are currently understood as ends in themselves with respect to their free and equal performance in the political domain (and their right to remain silent with regard to what is private). If legitimacy is identified with deliberation for the sake of citizens who are defined as fundamentally linguistic creatures, it follows and the prescription for democracy will be cast in terms of ever richer and more inclusive sites of deliberation or symbolic interaction. But what if deliberation is not the only or even the most effective and legitimate form of democratic negotiation? What if we consider that a different social ontology or model of intersubjectivity subtends the political dynamics of compromise and recognition? As Charles Taylor (1979) has argued:

To understand the concepts we have to be in on a certain experience, we have to understand a certain language, not just of words, but also a certain language of mutual action and communication, by which we blame, exhort, admire, esteem each other. In the end we are in on this because we grow up in the ambit of certain common meanings (“Interpretation and the sciences of man” 34).

In a field dominated by conceptualizations of reason, mind, and speech, such an endeavour takes seriously the call for a ‘corporeal turn’ in social and political theory; a conception of human *being* in which being-with-others is always already being-a-body-with-other-bodies. While feminist and critical race scholars have utilized phenomenology and the philosophy of emotions to investigate the lived emotional and psychological experience of domination in political life, the emotive moving body *that we are* remains under-explored.

The corporeal turn demands a comprehensive rejection of mind-body dualism. The body is not a substance that we simply live or experience ‘through’, since this reiterates

the body as an intermediary between being and world, subject and object, being and other, subject and subject. A full rejection of Platonic-Christian-Cartesian dualism involves a recognition that we are not simply beings who are ‘embodied’ in the flesh. As phenomenologist Maxine Sheets-Johnstone (1999b) observes, “the corporeal turn calls upon us to attend to something taken long for granted. In the present instance, it asks us to be mindful of movement. It thus asks us first of all to be silent, and, in our silence, to witness the phenomenon of movement – our own self-movement and the movement of all that is animate or animated in our surrounding world” (*PM* xviii). In order to redescribe democracy so that we may rethink and improve it, it is to an exploration of this silent bodily being-with-others in the writing of philosophers and scientists that we now turn.

Embodied Ontology

The silent body does not feature in most inquiries into politics for the simple reason that it is overlooked by virtue of its sheer immediacy. Richard Shusterman (2005) observes that this is the “Platonic-Christian-Cartesian” tradition of subjugating the body to the mind. The body is the most fundamental form of conscious experience, as Shusterman observes that “Although this basic level of intentionality is ubiquitous, its very pervasiveness and unobtrusive silence conceal its prevailing presence” (161), and for this reason it is chronically neglected. In his article “The Primacy of Expression,” Mickunas (2004) argues that idealist and materialist reductionism reacts to the fact that “the Western philosophical tradition, and specifically Western modern version, is dualistic. There is the mind/body relation in Plato, soul/body in Medieval thought, and psyche/body in current thought” (33).

As Drew Leder (1990) observes in *The Absent Body*, “A certain devaluation of the body, either in the form of neglect, depreciation, or outright condemnation, has formed an ongoing theme in our intellectual history to which all those who disagree must begin in response” (127). Leder explains:

the human body effaces itself in the use of language. The organs directly involved in receiving and generating signs are in focal disappearance. In reading, I do not attend to my eyes but from them. I do not attend to my mouth when speaking, or my ears when hearing, but from them to articulate the meanings. At the same time as these organs focally disappear, the rest of my body is often placed in background disappearance (122).

Perhaps the reason that the non-verbal context of politics goes unexplored in democratic theory is that western scholars are trained to understand politics in terms of speech and to position political ‘voice’ in contradistinction to silence which is a form of domination and the anathema of democracy. Not all western philosophers have taken this approach. Merleau-Ponty’s thought represents probably the greatest modern challenge to the mind/body dichotomy and the denigration of corporeality. For Merleau-Ponty, the weakness and corruptibility of the sensible body, the “flesh” as he would call it following Christian thinkers, is precisely that which allows us to be in the world. M.C. Dillon writes that

Merleau-Ponty's notion of bodily intentionality defies philosophical tradition by granting the body a kind of subjectivity instead of treating it as mere object of mechanism. But he is still more radical in extending the range of unreflective somatic subjectivity far beyond our basic bodily movements and sense perceptions to the higher operations of speech and thought that constitute philosophy's cherished realm of *logos* (163).

Since the body is so commonly effaced in the conception of *being* and the subject it is doubly effaced in the conception of being-*with-others* and the *intersubjective*. Again, not all theorists have forgotten themselves in this way. Sheets-Johnstone (1999a) writes that "Because we tend to forget that an intersubjectivity is first and foremost an intercorporeality, we tend to forget that meanings are articulated by living bodies. Common linguistic and conceptual focus is in fact wrongly placed: an intersubjectivity is more properly conceived and labelled an intercorporeality. We are there for each other first of all in the flesh" (98).

Likewise for Merleau-Ponty (1962), our perception of the world is articulated through a "silent language" (56). He writes that "In the silence of primary consciousness can be seen appearing not only what words mean, but also what things mean: the core primary meaning round which the acts of naming and expression take shape" (xvii). The silence of the world is rich with meaning. According to Merleau-Ponty, "Our view of man will remain superficial so long as we fail to go back to that origin, so long as we fail to find, beneath the chatter of words, the primordial silence, and as long as we do not describe the action that breaks the silence. The spoken word is a gesture and its meaning a world (214). In his published notes, Merleau-Ponty (1969) wrote that "at the level of the human body I will describe a pre-knowing; a pre-meaning, a silent knowing" (178). So, too, for Wittgenstein. In line with Heidegger's rejection of the Cartesian subject, though perhaps in contrast to Heidegger's views on language, the shared bodily being of others leads Wittgenstein (1991) to argue that "The common behaviour of mankind is the system of reference by means of which we interpret an unknown language" (§206). Embodied practices can generate commitments, likewise they can sanctify agreements, elicit compromises, make pleas, and render apologies, often with more force than the most reasonable or alluring argument.

We find similar observations on the emergence of commitments posed by philosopher Margaret Gilbert (1990) in her article "Walking Together: A Paradigmatic Social Phenomenon", in which she states that spontaneous activities such as walking together engender social responsibilities:

[G]oing for a walk together with another person involves participating in an activity of a special kind, one whose goal is the goal of a plural subject, as opposed to the shared personal goal of the participants. Alternatively, going for a walk involves an 'our goal' as opposed to two or more 'my goals'. I take it that there are many activities of this kind, which may be referred to as 'shared', 'joint', or 'collective' action (9).

Political theorists such as Iris Marion Young (1997) have argued that speech without such voice-less interactions is for the most part hollow and meaningless. In most cases what is said is secondary to and derivative of silent action. Young is one theorist of democracy who has acknowledged the significance of silent interaction in what she calls practices of ‘greeting’ or ‘care for bodies’ – interactions that nurture inclusive and positive relations. She writes:

Communicative interaction in which participants aim at reaching understanding is often peppered with gestures of politeness and deference, the absence of which is felt as coldness, indifference, insult. Discussion is also wrapped in nonlinguistic gestures that bring people together warmly, seeing conditions for amicability: smiles handshakes, hugs, the giving and taking of food and drink. In this respect bodies, and care for bodies, must enter an ideal of communicative democracy (70).

Deliberation is largely dependent on and secondary to silent ‘care for bodies’ which not only creates the conditions for effective citizen negotiation but constitutes the substance of democratic compromise and recognition. On this account silence is understood as a presence, as the field of affective and embodied relations that constitutes our primordial mode of being in the world, upon which speech and symbol emerge, and against which they are tested.

Silence and the Empire of Logos

The body continues to attract a great deal of attention in philosophical and political writing though it is most often related to the task of articulating the body. For many the body is a text to be interpreted and *spoken for* in the articulation of its meaning. Without a narrative to decode its comportment the body remains a reservoir of brute physicality and movement – a corporeal silence in need of symbolic or linguistic expression. The silence of the unarticulated body remains a void, an absence and negation of public meaning and the Arendtian antithesis of political life. The challenge presented by the corporeal turn is to see silence as a frame within which inter-corporeal meanings present themselves for negotiation. In his article “Silence as Gesture: Rethinking the Nature of Communicative Silences,” communications theorist Kris Acheson (2008) writes that we must abandon this paradigm if we are to “escape the binary of speech and silence and understand the human experience of silence in its communicative fullness (551-2).

The conventional attitudes towards the body and silence in social thought that we have discussed so far exhibit the distinctly western pre-occupation with the tripartite humanism of mind, reason, and speech, a pre-occupation that has allowed western scholars to be unreceptive to non-western understandings of body, emotion, and silence. As Communications theorist Patricia Covarrubias (2007) argues in her article “(Un)Biased in Western Theory: Generative Silence in American Indian Communication,”

Situating or perhaps caught in a Eurocentric sociocultural bipolar worldview speaking is good, silence is bad conceptualizations about what constitutes

proactive communication inspire some scholars (among other people) to treat silence as an ontological and epistemological vacuum waiting for talk to happen. Silence is treated as a suspended animation, stand-by position until real communicative opportunities ensue. The dearth of theories about silence from the bountiful pool of options about communication in general speaks loudly about theoretical biases (267).

Of course, as we have seen, logocentrism is hardly a modern pre-occupation. John Heath (2005) explains in *The Talking Greeks* that “Linking *all* marginal groups in Greece was the lack or deprivation of authoritative speech. All except animals *could* speak, but they were each thought to have a language disability of some sort. There was something wrong with their speech, either their grasp of Greek itself, or their control of it, or their ability to use it rationally and truthfully” (174). To that end, “the Greeks identified reduced speech with silence” (174). Since human beings are defined as political animals by virtue of their possession of speech and reason, language was venerated as the marker of humanity. According to Heath, “Slaves were said to lack *logos*. The easiest way to reinforce the system was to deny slaves speech, to denigrate their language in some fashion that kept them near the bestial level” (204), though we should not over-state the case. The Greeks also had a strong respect for the deed (*ergon*).

In the modern political reality, however, we are less concerned with the deeds of citizens. Political engagement is now almost completely an exercise in expression through language and symbol, deliberation and protest. In the era of mass politics silent ethical activity has been dislocated from its interface with politics and relegated to the domain of the personal and private. To be political, to be visible, is to be heard and not seen. To be sure, contemporary politics of recognition are not without their embarrassing exclusionary practices. But for many students of democracy it is not simply that voices do not get heard, it is that when fulfilled the demands of democratic engagement effectively colonize ways of being. This concern has led many agonistic democrats to describe how modes of deliberation particular to cultures and traditions continue to be displaced by norms of western democratic discourse. As James Tully (2002) explains:

Different practices of reasoning-with-others are grounded in distinctive customary local knowledges, repertoires of practical skills, genres of argumentation and tacit ways of relating to one another...If one wishes to be heard, then, it is necessary to act in accordance with the dominant practice of reasoning together and resolving differences, and, as a result, to gradually develop the form of identity and comportment characteristic of participants in this kind of practice. This is the unfreedom of assimilation for one is not free to challenge the implicit and explicit rules of the dominant practice of deliberation, but must conform to them and so be shaped by them (223).

It is for this reason that, as Young (2003) observes, activists will often abstain from deliberation engagement and pursue direct action because “To the extent that such implementation must presuppose constrained alternatives that cannot question existing institutional priorities and social structures, deliberation is as likely to reinforce injustice as to undermine it” (115). Young writes that the deliberative democrat naturally “finds

such refusal and protest action uncooperative and counterproductive” (114). The ‘care of bodies’ has no place in a politics built on speech:

Theorists of deliberative democracy...seem to have no place for care-taking, deferential, polite acknowledgment of the Otherness of others. Since much democratic discussion will be fraught with disagreement, anger, conflict, counterargument, and criticism, intermittent gestures of flattery, greeting, deference, and conciliatory caring keep commitment to the discussion at times of anger and disagreement (70).

It should come as little surprise, as Clause Offe (1999) suggests, that in modern democracies we can speak of “a structural scarcity of opportunities to build trust, or to accumulate sufficient reasons for trust, or to reciprocate the privilege of having been trusted by a sense of obligation, in a society that is mobile, complex, differentiated, and, as a consequence, largely opaque” (56). Quoting Dahl, Offe holds that modern democracy poses “both cognitive and affective obstacles to acquiring predispositions toward civic virtue” (57). He offers forms of surrogate trust, such as categorical trust built on shared national or civic identities, and institutional trust, where the normative meaning of institutions is trust proxy for its membership (70). Mark Warren (1999) concludes, however, that “the *core* of trust is interpersonal. Whatever it means to trust an institution is somehow scaled up from the domain of socially thick, face-to-face relations” (348).

In line with the Levinasian notion of the primacy of the ethical relation, the Danish philosopher Løgstrup argues that trust is the ontological genesis of sociality. Trust in the face-to-face encounter is first on the scene as the condition which makes speech and action intelligible. In their article “Emotional Expressivity and Trustworthiness: The Role of Nonverbal Behaviour in the Evolution of Cooperation,” psychologists Thomas Boone and Ross Buck (2003) present empirical evidence that “trust, or more accurately the communication of trustworthiness, is primarily an affective process and is governed, in part, through the communication of emotion,” which leads them to identify “a clear need to inject nonverbal emotionally expressive behavior into social dilemma research, which has downplayed or ignored its influence in the communication processes associated with cooperation” (179). Trust and speech stand in an uneasy tension.

Conclusions: Democracy in the Flesh

The conversational models put forward by deliberative democrats and theorists of the Arendtian persuasion have been inspired by the face-to-face engagement of interlocutors. But there have been other resources available modern political thought that could be used to theorize the face-to-face encounter; it does not always have to be a speech situation. Two years before Arendt published *The Human Condition*, Peter Laslett (1956) wrote “The Face to Face Society,” wherein he argues that for conflicts in face-to-face societies:

The process of solving the crisis and making the decision, will be to some degree one of ratiocination, analysing the situation in terms of propositions, relating these propositions logically, and deciding to act in the way that logical lays down. But to a larger degree it will be a matter of personal response, expressed not in propositions, but in exclamations, apostrophes, laughter and silences (158).

Laslett goes on to suggest that in the presence of the other there is always the possibility of “cooperation by physiological response and symmetry rather than by mental collaboration” and that “it may well be that the solution of the crisis takes place as much as a result of what is neither formulated nor expressed, as of what has been called ratiocination” (158). Here we might recall the practices of ‘greeting’ and ‘care for bodies’ articulated by Young, what Tully (2008b) refers to as “relationships of trust, conviviality or solidarity and civic-friendship across identity related differences and disagreements of various kinds” (290-291).

As Tully observes, “In theories of modernity, this grounded civic ethic is discredited by redescribing it as a pre-modern stage of historical and moral development and as a particular ethics of care in contrast the allegedly higher and universal theory of morality and justice for the abstracted and independent individuals of modern citizenship” (294). Most important, I believe, is Tully’s contention that such relations “in human and natural relations have been and continue to be the more basic and widely endorsed orientation of the world’s peoples in their diverse cultures and traditions for millennia” (294). The ethical domain of silent embodied interactions is denied within the borders of ‘civilized’ politics.

Insofar as speech and symbol are privileged as definitive of the political the spaces for freedom and agency, for an ethical life, are severely constrained. Logocentrism in the politics of recognition leads to a institutional colonization of those silent spaces where actors might have *embodied* a genuine mutually transformative negotiation. There is, therefore, a real danger that theories of deliberative and agonistic exchange have become a hegemonic discourse, an ideology of linguistic intersubjectivity which now restricts or denies the possibility of peace, respect, and friendship, in the spirit of the Two-Row Wampum. As Philips (1985) attests, “Academic researchers who make a living by talking may, along with other white-collar workers in industrialized societies, also overemphasize the importance of interaction structured through talk in the general scheme of life” (211). Discursive approaches may have become a tributary to the swelling current of western logophilia that began with the ancient Greeks and, like a river that continues to flood its banks in all directions, has never ceased expanding. The call for constructive silence is a call for a withdrawal, a recognition of the limitations of speech that points to a receding of discursive flood-waters to their banks. Perhaps only then will possibilities for a shared life that lay drowning in the depths of deliberation be allowed to flourish and grow.

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