

## **Bodiesnature in Daycare: guidelines for teaching with babies**

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**ABSTRACT – *Bodiesnature in Daycare: guidelines for teaching with babies.*** What can babies teach us with their affections? This and other questions permeate the reflections in this article. Using Cartography as a methodological approach, the research followed the affections expressed by babies and young children in the encounters between bodies and nature in the backyard of a public daycare center in Rio de Janeiro. Inspired by Spinoza, Stern and Haraway, the discussions are based on the understanding of the inseparable nature of body and mind, and on the responsiveness between different ways of being Nature. The analyses indicate that it is through affections, or encounters between different bodies, that we come to know the world and produce others. Babies experience other ways of existing, becoming-with other bodies in a composition of self and other.

**Keywords: Babies. Early Childhood Education. Affection. Nature. Body.**

**RESUMO – *Corposnatureza na Creche: indicativos para a docência com bebês.*** O que os bebês podem nos ensinar com seus afetos? Essa e outras indagações permeiam as reflexões do presente artigo. A partir da Cartografia como caminho metodológico, a pesquisa acompanhou os afetos manifestados pelos bebês e crianças pequenas nos encontros entre *corposnatureza* no quintal de uma creche pública carioca. Inspiradas por Spinoza, Stern, Haraway, as discussões são pautadas no entendimento do corpo e mente como indissociáveis, e na responsividade entre diferentes modos de ser Natureza. As análises indicam que é nas afecções, ou encontros entre diferentes corpos, que conhecemos o mundo e que produzimos outros. Os bebês experimentam outras formas de existir, agenciando-se com outros corpos em uma relação de composição de si e do outro.

**Palavras-chave: Bebês. Educação Infantil. Afeto. Natureza. Corpo.**

## Introduction

This present work is the result of a master's research project, whose main objective was to accompany and analyze the affections expressed by babies and young children in the relationships that emerged from the encounters between their bodies and the other ways of Nature in the backyard of a municipal daycare in Rio de Janeiro, taking cartography as a methodological path, in accordance with the perspectives of Kastrup and Passos (2016). The proposal was to look at bodynature from an integrated perspective, considering animal, plant, and mineral beings, as well as natural phenomena, as bodies that agency and compose themselves with humans, who are also part of Nature.

In the search for possibilities of being with the other in the daycare, the research was guided by the following questions: How does the body express its affections? How can we 'give language' to these affections? How does the baby's power to exist increase or decrease in encounters with other bodies that are also nature? What can the baby's body do in relation to other bodies? What paths do babies and young children show us so that we can experience ourselves as nature and thus build new educational practices in Early Childhood Education, especially in daycare centers?

The movements of babies and young children were tracked for four months in their compositions, mainly in the daycare yard. Their free movements, desires and shared attention were observed, thus constituting the methodology based on events. The babies and young children were 'heard' in their affections, in the monitoring of the effects of the research process itself; effects that took place between them, in the research, and in the production of knowledge that was born in this context. The encounters that took place were recorded in a dense and affective manner in a field diary by one of the authors, who participated directly in the field; at times, the encounters were videotaped and subsequently transcribed in writing, with the aim of capturing the nuances and details of the interactions. They were then organized and categorized according to the lines of meaning that were relevant to the objectives of the study.

Inspired by Kastrup and Passos (2016), we understand that mapping in this research implies inhabiting an existential territory, seeking to know the experience in its creative dimension, following the processes on the common plane that involves everyone; in this case, babies, teachers, researcher, bearing in mind that to know is to create reality. The production of knowledge took place alongside the building of sensitive relationships between the researcher, teachers and babies, as will be highlighted later in this work. In this process, there was a balance between proximity, which allowed for affection, and distance, which allowed for new visions and reflections on the daycare experience.

Inspired by Alvarez and Passos (2020), we affirm that "[...] mapping is always composing with the existential territory, engaging with it" (p.135). From this perspective, thinking about research with babies

presupposes an openness to accompany their movements, emotions, the lines they walk — in their rhythms, intensities and also in the landings of their journeys — giving visibility to the creative power of each one, looking for the flows of desires manifested by the body in its expressive potential, on the plane of the affections that are born between bodies. This was the movement constituted in this research.

Next, we will explain the theoretical and methodological references that accompanied the fieldwork. We will discuss the conception of nature and bodynature that inform the research. Next, we will present the daycare center, the field of research and, finally, the compositions between babies and other ways of expression of Nature in this context, which inspires us to discuss teaching with babies.

### **Beyond the Human-Nature Dichotomy: mesh, kinship, and affection**

In counterpoint to approaches that seek to reflect on the relationship between child and nature, or between body and nature, this work aims to understand compositions, unsettling or dissolving dichotomies. Separating the words “child”, “body” and “nature” reinforces the hegemonic, Western, capitalist, colonialist vision, which represents in the word “nature” a whole thought of apartness and subjugation. On the other hand, we ask: can the composition of the term bodynature effectively challenge this dichotomous perspective? This question accompanied the entire research process.

But, after all, what do we call nature? According to Chauí (2000), in Western thought, Nature has several meanings: it can be considered a spontaneous force that moves beings; or it can be considered as the essence of a being. From a modern perspective, it is understood as order and a necessary universal connection between things, constituted in natural laws. The term is used to express what is natural, in the sense of what is produced and developed without human interference. In this way, nature is opposed to artifice. Nature is also understood as the visible world, the environment: Nature is what exists outside of us. Finally, Chauí (2000) brings up the Western conception of contemporary sciences that nature is a concept produced by men themselves, a human construction, a cultural object.

With these different senses of what Nature is, we can contemplate the ways in which Western humans have related to life. According to Tiriba (2018), “[...] the way the children of the human species and other species are treated stems from the way we relate to life, to nature, to the cosmos” (p. 163). Thinking about these ways of relating provokes questions about the importance of these relationships in the daily life of Early Childhood Education. How can we look at the power of the composition of children and other ways of Nature, if the lens we use is impregnated with conceptions that separate us and place us above what is recognized as nature?

In counterpoint, Haraway (2022) states that for man to get out of this exceptional, dominant position, he needs to return to nature, to be

snatched back to that other side of the divide from which he was taken. This view dilutes the two terms of the relationship, nature and culture, from the perspective that our relationships are foundational and happen in kinship between humans and non-humans, in the possibility of a reciprocal becoming-with, in unexpected combinations and collaborations. In this way, we are affected by the body of the other in motion, becoming human “with”.

The above perspective is in line with the principles of the Philosophy of Spinoza, a 17th century philosopher who brought an alternative vision to the philosophical tradition that was being born in his time, Modernity. The path that Spinoza (2020) presents challenges and criticizes the modern conception of nature as subjugated to the human. For the author, we are integrated beings, because there is a single substance: “[...] by substance I mean that which exists in itself and is conceived by itself, that is, that whose concept does not require the concept of something else from which it must be formed” (Spinoza, 2020, p. 13).

Commenting on the concept of God/Nature/Substance, Deleuze (2002) states that for Spinoza, Nature is One: “[...] a single Nature for all bodies, a single Nature for all individuals, a Nature which is itself an individual varying in an infinity of ways” (p. 127). This unique reality, Substance/Nature, is absolutely infinite, since it is made up of an infinity of attributes, its existence is an expression of the timeless reality of its essence and only depends on itself, being the condition of everything. Nature is understood as a plane of immanence. In the words of Deleuze (2002), Nature “[...] is the exposition of a common plane of immanence on which all bodies, all souls, all individuals stand” (p. 127).

Thus, Spinoza (2020) challenges the view that we are separate from nature: “[...] the whole of nature is a single individual, whose parts, that is, all bodies, vary in infinite ways, without any change in the whole individual” (p. 65). In his conception, individuals are modes of a single substance (Nature), which is expressed in every human being through two attributes: extension and thought; thus, we are a unity. The modes of Nature are the modes of being, it is the world itself that is produced. For Spinoza (2020), Nature expresses itself in “[...] an infinity of things, in an infinity of modes” (p. 26). According to Deleuze (2002), along this path, modes are effects, things are real beings with their own existences, remaining in their attributes, within a univocity of Being.

Nature is the very potency of the world — a continuously active and productive force — Nature produces everything that exists, as Deleuze (2002) affirms. In the Spinozist view of Substance, both natural and artificial bodies are part of the immanent plane of Nature.

Tim Ingold's (2021) ideas are also in line with this perspective. According to the anthropologist, we are the world, a mesh, in interweaving lines. Threads, which he calls organisms, in which there is neither interior nor exterior. Organisms are constituted within a relational field, interwoven lines, with no boundary separating the two domains. For the author, “[...] things are their relationships” (p. 119).

Ingold's invitation (2021) is to look at this world from a different perspective, no longer seeing it as an inert substrate, as a surface where living beings move around, as a landscape, a scenery, but rather to look at it with the movement of becoming, in flows and movements. According to the author, we inhabit our environment, we are part of it, and it is part of us. We live and breathe in a world of earth and sky, unbecoming earth and unbecoming sky. To perceive the environment is to join in the flows and movements that contribute to ongoing training.

It's true that it's not the butterfly alone that flies, but the butterfly in the air, and it's not the fish alone that swims, but the fish in the water. [...] for things to interact, they must be immersed in a kind of force field created by the currents of the environment that surrounds them. Separated from these currents [...] they would be dead. [...] If it wants to live, then the butterfly must be returned to the air and the fish to the water (Ingold, 2021, p. 149).

How can we, in the midst of this mixture that composes the human, be part of Nature and yet place ourselves beyond it? Ingold (2021) proposes that the very meaning of "human" already points to the dilemma of being a creature that, in order to know itself, has to renounce being in the world, since it is considered a species that transcends nature. In order to get out of this dualism, the author states that it would be necessary to recognize humanity as "[...] the ongoing historical process of our mutual and collective self-creation" (Ingold, 2021, p. 177). Organism and environment are not separate, but are like interwoven threads, like a mesh, creating and recreating each other.

As Haraway (2016) states, no species acts in isolation, organic species and abiotic actors make history. Thus, according to the philosopher, we are composites, all composites, fertilizers and relatives, since kinship brings with it an arrangement: "[...] all biotic and abiotic forces, earthlings, share a common 'flesh' and making relatives is the possibility of making-with, becoming-with, composing-with" (Haraway, 2016, p. 141), one being is always becoming with many. This composition includes a "[...] myriad of entities in intra-active arrangements, including more-than-human, other-than-human, inhuman and human-as-humus" (Haraway, 2016, p. 140).

For Haraway (2016), making relatives is making people from the perspective of defamiliarization, understanding that all earthlings can compose-with, and thus have strange, uncanny and active kinships: "[...] kinship-different-non-natal and uncategorized!" (p. 145). In this way, beings constitute each other and themselves in their relationships, in their quests to reach each other.

In this relationship of agency, in which all earthlings are relatives, Haraway (2022) proposes the responsiveness of gazes that lead us to see again and thus enter the world of becoming-with, a dance in which we become mutually available. When we relate in a way that returns the gaze to the other, in a horizontal relationship of respect, recognizing each other as related and understanding that the relationship is reciprocal, there is responsiveness, as touching and returning the gaze makes us accountable.

Reflecting on this responsive, respectful, and responsible relationship among the modes of Nature remains a challenge for Western humans, immersed in a perception opposite to what is considered nature. It is a constant exercise to try to get out of this worldview and really feel-think about the kinship between the beings that we dichotomize into biotic and abiotic, as if life were possible with this separation.

On the same level, the perspective of affection as the axis of relationships is important in understanding the compositions of babies with other babies, adults and other beings. In this vein, Daniel Stern's work in the field of Psychology provokes reflection, precisely because the author studies the relational and affective possibilities of babies from birth, stating that there is no non-social moment in the early days or months of life. From the very beginning, there is an effort toward relationship — a construction of senses of self by babies through their interactions with others.

In her studies with babies, Stern (1992; 2004) reflects on the power of encounters, of the gazes established from a very early age in the interactions between mothers, caregivers and babies, in joint attention. It highlights the intensity present in this relationship, confirming the presence of the capacity for responsive contact, which promotes a particular connection with the other, a contact that the author states takes place throughout human life.

According to Stern (1992), babies are psychically active from the beginning of life, with a relative mental, affective and cognitive autonomy that leads them to participate in the construction of their world. Thus, it highlights the power of the non-verbal from the first days of life, the affections manifested by the body from the experiences that emerge in interactions with others.

Valuing the wealth of sensations experienced by babies in composition with the surrounding others, not just through the representational bias of language, is an important project of Stern's work (1992) and provokes us in the daily life of Early Childhood Education to make contact with manifestations such as looks, gestures, facial expressions, as relational modes of children, from babies onwards, in everyday life.

Stern (1992) brings us face to face with the power of babies, especially in what he calls vitality affects, qualities of feelings and sensations involved in vital processes: “[...] the different forms of sensation elicited by these vital processes influence the organism most of the time. We are never without their presence, whether we are aware of them or not” (Stern, 1992, p. 48). Also, according to the author, the perspective of an affective attunement, developed from the capacity to sustain joint attention with adults in their contexts, nurtures social possibilities and the expansion of babies in the world.

The relational possibilities of the body in encounters are infinite. Spinoza (2020) is also a reference for this proposition. For the author, the encounter takes place when two bodies affect each other and are affected, and in this encounter the power of life may or may not occur. How can we think of possibilities that promote acceptance of the other

person's experience? How can we instigate and sustain the search for encounters, which increase the power of being? The ways of touching and being touched will depend on the forces present in the relationship. What kind of relationships can we establish in contact with babies and young children that allow them to express their bodies, their feelings of vitality and their affective attunements?

There is no escaping the permanent deconstruction and construction of forms, because what characterizes the body for Spinoza is the power to affect and be affected by other bodies, generating new forms and modifications. This perspective brings the possibility of an Early Childhood Education crossed by the body, by its joy, its varied intensities, its constant creation in each encounter or affection, the possibility of an embodied education, in which the body pulses with life in its relations between bodies.

Spinozist philosophy presents the human body as relational, moved by the force of affections and affects, a body that is not separate from the mind nor from Nature. Spinoza proposes that we turn to the effects produced in encounters, to the forces of affects, and perceive, in experience, the power of bodies. For the philosopher, affect is the affection of the body, it is thought itself felt in the body. Thus, “[...] by affect I understand the affections of the body, by which its power to act is increased or diminished, stimulated or restrained, and, at the same time, the ideas of these affections” (Spinoza, 2020, p. 98). Affections are the modifications that occur in the modes, they are the effects of other modes upon them—the body being affected by the world. For Deleuze (2002), affections thus designate what happens in the way of Nature, which brings a certain state to the body. There is a transition, a passage, and affection refers to this state of the affected body.

We feel joy when a body encounters ours and composes itself with it, when an idea meets our soul and composes itself with it; conversely, we feel sadness when a body or an idea threatens our own coherence (Deleuze, 2002, p. 25)

Accompanying babies in their discoveries, in their emotions, in their affections and understanding how they generate effects and what these effects are like — whether they please the baby, whether they increase or decrease potency — is a perspective in this research, in the movement to generate possibilities for pedagogical practices and teaching in the daycare center. These are practices that value the nuances of relating, allowing babies and young children the chance to experience themselves as powerful. In this way, the teacher's role is to trust in the ability of babies and very young children to intervene in reality in a creative way.

In sum, the research presented here adopts this perspective, based on Spinozist thought. Nature is understood as a plane of immanence in which powers relate to each other, a unique and infinite reality, made up of an infinity of attributes. What happens in the field of thought is parallel to what happens in the body. At the same time, we understand the kinship between humans and other modes of nature, composed in a mesh, with the affective force being the driving force

behind babies' encounters with each other, with adults and with other beings in Nature. These compelling ideas accompanied the production of the research and are provocative for the field of research and practice in daycare centers.

### **In the Daycare Center: care, unwalling, and affection as possibilities for the composition of bodynature**

In the field of Early Childhood Education, the mind-body divide is strongly expressed in the educate-care dichotomy (Guimarães, 2011; 2023). The action of educating in the daycare generally materializes as instruction — from this perspective, to educate is to instruct and transmit knowledge. Knowledge is considered just a segmentation of the mind, “developing the mind” becomes the goal of practices that dichotomize mind/body. Thus, proposals to teach colors, numbers, letters, object naming, and the representation of time in calendars are examples of some actions that are valued from the developmental perspective of the education of babies and young children. Still, in the dualistic conception, the act of caring in daycare is limited to attending to children's basic needs such as sleep, feeding, and hygiene demands — care as guardianship (Guimarães, 2011).

The thinking that separates mind/body, cognition/emotion, educating/caring is materialized in the actions that teachers consider to be important or not in teaching. The idea is that teachers are not working when they are in spaces where children have more freedom in their movements. Why do the moments when we are in these spaces following the children's discoveries seem not to be “pedagogical work”?

There is an intentionality that can be present in the teacher's indirect actions: a Pedagogy of Care (Guimarães, 2023). It's about understanding care as a form of responsive relationship with children, including babies. In this movement, the teacher organizes spaces, with different contexts, in order to actively observe and follow the children's interests. The teacher's attention is focused on the babies' movements, thus following the events, without anticipating results — in a pedagogical attentiveness (Guimarães; Arenhart; Santos, 2019). The meaning of this route lies in the dialogical dimension of the event itself, as it allows the babies to move more freely. In this context, the teacher is present to observe the processes, to accompany and be with the bodies in movement, seeking out their interests, thus expanding the relating between bodies and moving away from the perspective of controlling directed activities, in which everyone must perform a given task at the same time. In fact, we can say that, beyond observation, what is at stake is the quality of the adult's presence in the relationship with children and babies in the daycare.

The Pedagogy of Care presents itself as an alternative for thinking about children's moments of freedom when they are in the yard, patios or open spaces, where the environment itself already provides the context, constitutes the mesh. The pedagogical action in these moments can be conceived from the perspective of the intentionality and atten-

tiveness of the adults in accompanying the babies' movements, trusting in their potency. They trust in the possibilities that emerge in the relationships between baby-bodies and other bodies that are also nature, learnings that arise as captures of emerging signs. It's about trusting babies' actions and being available to accompany and support their actions, thus giving another dimension to the very sense of body.

The concept of a body separate from the mind, which needs to be tamed, deprived of its emotions and desires — since they are considered to be the factors that prevent human beings from achieving what has been called reason — has long been constructed as truth in our Western, capitalist, patriarchal and colonialist society (Tiriba, 2011; 2018; 2014). We see in the movements of babies and young children the resistance produced by baby-bodies, because even in the face of this rigid structure that tries to prevent bodily expressions, babies and young children go beyond the limits of what has been configured to be a body.

For Tiriba and Thomaz (2021), the “[...] pedagogy of enclosure is the result of a certain way of conceiving life — European, modern — which presupposes domination, control, disciplinary normalization” (p.3). In opposition to this thinking, Tiriba (2018) proposes unwalling as a way of strengthening human links with what is alive, which demands the need to offer good encounters. In this way, inspired by Spinoza, she affirms that the more connections with what is alive, the more the power of being increases and the greater the freedom of the subjects to launch themselves towards what affects them, the greater the human plenitude will be.

Several studies in the field of Early Childhood Education defend the importance of the relationship between the “child” and “nature” and affirm the power of this encounter, pointing out that it is still a challenge to find institutions that value relating to the outdoors, and other forms of Nature<sup>1</sup> in their daily routine. These studies inspire this present work.

In this research, the backyard was a field of compositions. Bodies and nature are present in the daycare, beyond the yard. But the backyard invites, provokes and enables encounters that increase the power of being. From this perspective, in addition to the relationship with nature as the child's other, we seek to accompany babies with nature, understanding continuities between different beings, challenges for teaching and indications of the power of babies in these relationships.

It is important to note that the Aracy Guimarães Rosa Municipal Daycare, where the research was conducted, is located in the South Zone of Rio de Janeiro and serves children from diverse neighborhoods, as it is situated in a central area. It serves families residing in the neighborhoods of Catete, Flamengo, Glória, Laranjeiras, and Centro. Its proximity to the subway also allows families from other areas of Rio, such as Tijuca, to choose this daycare<sup>2</sup>. In the year of the research, the daycare served a total of 131 babies and young children aged between 6 months and 3 years, organized into the following groups: Nursery,

Toddler I and Toddler II. It was also composed of 22 adults, organized into three professional categories: Early Childhood Education Teacher (ECE Teacher), Assistant Early Childhood Education Teacher (Assistant ECE Teacher), and Early Childhood Education Assistant (ECE Assistant), all with teaching roles.

Three professional profiles work in the daily operations of daycare centers within the municipal network of Rio de Janeiro.<sup>3</sup> Disparities are observed regarding required qualifications, career plans, working hours, salaries, and differentiated responsibilities; however, in their everyday interactions with the children, they all perform an educational role. For the child, they are all adults of reference. Children, even from infancy, do not differentiate the professional by the position they hold in the institution. Thus, following the child's perspective and affirming relationships as an important axis of the pedagogical act, as well as the function of educating that crosses all positions in the daily routine life of the daycare, we have assigned the category of teacher to all professionals who relate to children on a daily basis (ECE Teacher — Early Childhood Education Teacher, Assistant ECE Teacher — Assistant Early Childhood Education Teacher, and ECE Assistant — Early Childhood Education Assistant).

For four months, the desires and attention of babies from two nursery groups (EI-11 and EI-12) were observed, primarily in the daycare's backyard. Each class was made up of 25 babies aged between 8 months and 18 months, with 4 professionals spread over the 8 hours the institution was open. According to the distribution of positions with an educational function in the municipality of Rio de Janeiro, of these professionals, 2 were Early Childhood Education Teachers, 1 was an Assistant Early Childhood Education Teacher and 5 were Early Childhood Education Agents.

We observed the babies in their free movements, in their desires and attention, seeking to understand the affections manifested in these encounters, thus constituting a methodology based on events. It was a cartographic intervention-investigation that relied on shared experience and attentiveness as possible pathways for research.

Following Kastrup and Herlani's (2018) proposition, cartography involves monitoring the processes that affect us, transform us and also produce worlds. It is a practice, an experimentation of thought, in tune with the processual nature of investigation, which aims to accompany a process and not represent objects. It's always about investigating a production process. We followed the production of the babies' affective worlds, the affections that resonated with the teachers, and new possible ways of seeing the babies within the daycare, as well as the daycare with the babies.

At this point, we present a few scenes that express the potency of the babies' encounters with other bodiesnature in the yard — fifteen minutes of life in the daycare's yard. First of all, we'd like to say that the names of the babies and professionals were invented. Names were cho-

sen that, in some way, were close to their own names, so that the writing would maintain the closest possible proximity to their identities<sup>4</sup>. It is important to emphasize that the ethical aspects of the research were approved by the Ethics Committee through the Brazil Platform. The methodological decision to identify the daycare was made considering the authorization granted by the Ethics Committee for the disclosure of the institution's name. In addition, the relevance of this specific daycare's participation in the research was also a determining factor for this choice.

The accounts transcribed here are excerpts from the field diary of one of the researchers, the authors of this work. They happen from her involvement with the babies, from the movement of closeness and distance promoted by writing, above all.

We invite readers to enter the backyard engaging their senses, experiencing themselves through smell, sight, touch, hearing, sensitivity, and emotions, just as the researcher, involved in the process of seeing, touching, and feeling the backyard.

*Fifteen minutes in the yard...*

*(Teachers: Amanda, Giovana, Carla / Babies: Lua, Antônio, Benjamin, Laís)*

*Amanda tells the team that she's going to check the yard, if it's too wet, since it rained the day before. On the way back, she says: "It's fine, it's not too wet. We'll change the children's clothes if we have to", and Giovana agrees.*

*Once the adults have decided to go to the yard, Amanda calls the children to come out: "Shall we play in the yard?" "Get some sun?"*

*Antônio, who was in Giovana's arms, begins to cry when she places him on the ground in preparation to leave. He crawls out of the room, already looking for Giovana's arms again. What could be the reason for the crying? Do you want to be held? Or is it the movement of putting toys away? The discomfort of not knowing what's coming next? I try to put myself in Antônio's place, in the growing discontent he expresses through his crying, feelings that seem to intensify. Giovana takes him in her arms, and a wave of relief gradually seems to radiate through the room.*

*As I left the room, Lua took my hand, guiding me through the room to the elevator and then from the elevator to the backyard. The "middle yard" is occupied, so Amanda tells us to go to the "top yard", where there are trees. They hadn't yet visited this part of the yard. The teachers led the children to the end of the yard... It's a sunny day, and the humidity from last night's rain is present in the soil and grass, making the weather very pleasant.*

*The children are barefoot and spread out, tracing the space. Antonio and Benjamin, who were carried in arms, are placed on the grass. Antonio starts to cry... He wants to be on Giovana's arms. He crawls toward her, still crying. While crawling, the tops of his feet touch the grass. He drags his feet, and in this movement, the dry leaves follow his path. His hands and feet move across the grass and soil. He begins to support himself on his hands and the soles of his feet. A sense of well-being seems to take over and begin to grow, as Antônio's crying ceases and his search for Giovana stops as well... He finds a leaf, pauses, sits down, picks it up, and observes it. His gaze traces the cracks and lines of the object he has found. Still focused on his encounter with the leaf, with his other hand he begins to pull the grass with his little fingers; he pulls, and directs his gaze to his fingers, as if to confirm that he has managed to catch the grass, he moves his fingers in a mutual touch, thus demonstrating the perception that they are empty. He tries again. On this new attempt, a few grasses accompanied him, he looked closely and then spreads them on the ground. He looks around a bit and sees a larger*

*dry leaf. He lets go of the first leaf he found, which was still in one of his hands, and picks up the new leaf he found. Then he drops it. He crawls a little further, stops again and spreads the dirt and leaves with a back-and-forth motion of the hand.... He looks at his hand, as if the sensation of contact still lingers even when the movement is at rest. He continues on his way, crawling towards Giovana. He continues to crawl, placing the sole of his foot on the ground, feeling the chill still in the earth from the rain last night. Now, Antonio returns to his primary goal, finding Giovana. He goes on, past the obstacles he encounters (the cement steps on the floor) and finally reaches her, her favorite cuddle spot! Giovana sits on the ground and puts him on her lap, she is also barefoot. Stretch out her legs. Antonio settles into her lap, his feet still in contact with the soil. Giovana says: "It's nice here, right?", referring to the part of the yard that the class hadn't been to yet. "This shade is very nice!" (the shade of the banana tree). "I don't even want to leave!"*

*Amanda comments on the lack of toy pots, saying "there could be some for them to play with," and goes off looking for any leftover pots that might have been forgotten by other groups. She finds a little pot, a watering can and a shovel.*

*Benjamin also cried when he was placed on the grass. Teacher Carla comments on his crying: "Benjamin isn't a big fan, he doesn't like grass". Benjamin is sitting down, crying. A growing irritation seems to cause his hands to move to his hair, rubbing it, sliding with the same movement to his face and then, with his hands more closed, rubbing his eyes. The irritation seems to increase. In a brief moment, I notice that the intensity of the crying seems to decrease when his hand touches the grass, he pulls it, and at that moment, focuses his attention, in a very quick mixture of strangeness and curiosity. Amanda notices Benjamin's irritation and approaches him. He feels her move towards him and lifts his head to see. Amanda picks him up and takes him and his toys to the shade of the banana tree. She sits on the ground and places him on her lap, talking to Benjamin while moving the little shovel: "Look how cool, Benjamin! Shall we dig to get some soil?" Benjamin observes Amanda's movement. His legs are stretched out, and he seems to pull back, as if he doesn't want to touch the soil that insists on meeting him, because his feet still carry traces of the contact. Laís comes over a little tearful to Amanda. Noticing that she also wanted to be held, Amanda slowly lifts Benjamin from her lap and places him sitting on the ground near her... His discomfort seems to lessen. He picks up the shovel that was now on the ground and begins to make movements in the soil, just as Amanda had done with him. Benjamin grabs the bucket and tries to put the soil into it using the shovel. Laís, who was on Amanda's lap, becomes interested in what Benjamin is doing and moves closer to him, sitting on the ground nearby. He puts soil on Laís's leg, and she watches it slide down her skin. At that moment, the two are called to look in the same direction... It's Amanda, announcing that it's time for lunch.*

*Lunchtime is here... The time in the yard is different... It's gone so fast... Giovana comments: "Well, it was so nice here... Is it time yet?" and I find myself reflecting on how much time we spend in the classroom and how much time we spend in the backyard. (Field diary — 31/04/2023).*

How do babies compose themselves with other bodies that are also nature? By understanding the importance of these encounters, questions arise when feeling-thinking about the baby's body: how does one experience nature? What forces move through our bodies, which inhabit an existential territory and are producing knowledge?

In the scene, we perceive affecting and being affected, which expands worlds through a sensitive gaze and the perception of the effects of encounters on bodies. The body is also open to relationships and the production of meaning, discoveries and knowledge, building perspectives for new pedagogical practices that consider life as an event, that

consider relationships as “the pedagogical” and that consider non-humans as subjects of these relationships. It is through affections that we come to know the world and that we also produce other worlds from these encounters.

Thinking of the body as integrated — the bodynature — free from the dichotomous strata of Western and Cartesian thought, is to think in terms of the power of experimentation, the power of compositions between bodiesnature, the power of the movement of flows, considering that we will never find a limit to the body, which in this movement is in constant becoming; thus, it is not possible to interpret it, but rather to experience it as practice, as agency.

In this way, being in the backyard and noticing Antonio's composition of leaves, grasses, humidity and soil reminds us of the possibilities for teachers to accompany, to be with. Accompanying Antonio, we wondered about the tendency of adults to separate babies from leaves, soil and water, failing to perceive the composition that brings well-being and joy. Often, with the leaf, we only focus on the possibilities of collage, of conversations about the leaf's shades of green, about its varied sizes, as if knowledge were only representation, as if knowing wasn't in the encounter itself, in the affections produced from Antônio's composition with the leaf.

Antônio also constitutes his subjectivity by relating to the leaf and to the grass in the yard. It is in the yard that our wholeness is revealed — our bodies immersed in the relationship, in the pleasure of the encounter that does not separate human and nature, subject and object. The encounter expands the bodies, expands the environment, the very counter-space that modifies the collective, affecting the other bodies nearby.

We can say that the backyard in this research functions as a counter-space, a heterotopia within the daycare, drawing on Foucault's (2021) proposition, as it transgresses the Western conception of school, in which knowledge is still materialized in classrooms. The concept of heterotopia invites us to consider places that stand in opposition to all others. Thus, heterotopia, or a “situated utopia,” is what Foucault describes as a place “[...] outside all places” (p. 20), “[...] heterotopias, absolutely other spaces” (p. 21).

For the philosopher, heterotopias — unlike utopias, which are conceived as lawless spaces, as places of dreams — are real utopias, since we live in them and do not exist in empty or neutral spaces. Thus, heterotopias, present in all societies, may be understood as spaces that stand in opposition to utopias as they are commonly known and described. For Foucault (2021), heterotopias constitute the contestation of other spaces; they are connected to geographical spaces while simultaneously deconstructing them.

In this sense, conceiving the backyard as a heterotopia implies looking toward other ways of living, toward the forces that emerge between bodies. More than merely a “change of scenery” that allows the child to go outdoors, move around, or play with the available toys, the

backyard enables us to imagine pedagogical practices that acknowledge the power of encounters and attend to subtleties.

The fifteen minutes spent in the backyard reveal how learning departs from a reproductive logic of recognition and, in this perspective, takes on an inventive dimension driven by sensibility. In the experience with Antônio in the backyard, we can observe compositions — agencements, in the sense proposed by Deleuze and Guattari (2021). Upon encountering the leaf, Antônio's body is captured by textures, sensations, and affections that call him into relation.

Throughout the research, the babies demonstrated that they were experimenting with other modes of existence, acting with their bodies in responsive relations. Being with babies in their relationships with other beings nurtures the hope for the power to experience other worlds.

Faced with this event, what is Nature? How can we, in light of this mixture that constitutes the human being, be of nature and yet place ourselves beyond it? Haraway (2022) asserts that one being is always becoming-with many. They are compost, fertilizer. Thus, drawing on the ideas of this philosopher, we affirm that human modes of nature are constituted through their agencements with the leaf, the stone, the worm, the water, the soil, and the air, wherein all earthly beings are related.

Next, in another scene from the field diary, the composition between Rael and the water droplets leads us to reflect on the power of encounters, responsiveness, and the subtleties of teaching, reaffirming the importance of other modes of Nature present in the daily life of the daycare — standing in contrast to the colonization of movement, to the expectation of synchronized, disciplined, and orderly gestures.

Diving in droplets...

(Teacher: Alana / Babies: Alex, Flor, Talita, Rael, Tiago, Luana, Valéria, Igor)

*The babies in nursery EI-12 play in the room with the empty ice cream pots and balls provided by their teacher Alana, while their diapers are being changed. Alex places the pot on Flor's head, who likes the idea and responds to Alex with a smile while simultaneously putting her hand on the head. She continues the game, taking the pot off her head and putting it on her classmates' heads.*

*There are many possibilities for the babies... Some put the balls in the pot and scatter them around the room, then run and kick them. Talita plays with the lid of the pot. With the music playing in the background, she sits and joins in, tapping her little hands on the lid that has become a tambourine. What they experience in their daily lives is represented in their play. Flor finds balls with holes that fit her little fingers, she looks at what she's made and comes over to show me.*

*After the diaper change, Alana calls the children to organize the room...*

*Rael is playing with the balls on the board, in the tray where the chalk and markers are kept. Standing, he arranges the balls in a line. Other children notice their play and start picking up the balls. His attentive involvement with the balls is interrupted and everything explodes! A feeling of irritation invades Rael, who starts throwing the balls, expressing his growing indignation at the interruption to his play. He babbles loudly, protesting the other children's interference in his play. To his disappointment,*

*there's no way around it, the children keep taking his balls. As a reaction, he bursts out with sudden hand movements, knocking down all the little balls that were lined up on the board. Like an electric shock, he starts crying, showing a lot of irritation. Alana picks him up in her arms and starts talking to me about Rael: "He's like that, very methodical". Even while being held, Rael keeps crying, still upset.*

*After the room is tidied up, Alana invites everyone to sit down and put on their shoes, as they're about to go outside to the yard. Rael is still upset, crying. All of them are wearing shoes! The smaller ones, who aren't walking yet, are wearing socks.*

*Let's go to the middle yard. Rael's frustration is still evident in his gaze and in his gradually fading cry. At first, he doesn't want to stay in the area... He holds onto the gate leading out of the middle yard and starts shaking it, as if trying to remove the obstacle blocking his way. His crying becomes more intense. Teacher Alana goes to him and guides him toward the playhouse. His crying lessens a bit, and he begins to calm down, moving around the area, searching and exploring inside and outside the playhouse for something that interests him.*

*Alana proposed that the group paint the backyard wall. After a small group used the materials in their play, she goes to wash the brushes at the tap in the yard. Rael sees the water running from the tap. He runs towards the water, which is dripping with ink. His focused and determined gaze showed that he had found something important to him. "You can get out. Not today Rael", "Today we're not going to make a mess with the water!" says Alana, finishing washing the brushes. Rael raises his arms and shakes his hands in protest and watches the water flow. Alana continues to explain that "we won't be playing with pots and water today... We'll do it another day". He tries to approach the tap and Alana holds his hand lightly, directing him to the opposite side of the tap. But Rael doesn't give up in the face of Alana's denial. He wanted the water. He comes back slowly and gradually approaches the tap. Alex also approaches. Alana turns to the children and says, "Oh, you really want to play with water, don't you? Oh, how I wish we could have a big shower-bath... But not today, guys!"*

*Alex moves away from the tap, and Rael keeps approaching. He grabs the valve, tries to turn it, bends down, looks under the tap, and holds one of his hands underneath. And the long-awaited meeting happens: a droplet lands on his hand. The pacifier in his mouth couldn't hide the smile that came from Rael's lips. A feeling of well-being seemed to invade him. He looked at me, saw that I was filming, smiled and returned his gaze to the drop that persisted in finding him.*

*Alana sees that I'm filming and says to me: "Too bad you didn't see them at the shower — the mess it was..."*

*I'm still filming Rael. He stands in front of the tap, watching and touching the droplets that fall. The droplets that insisted on meeting. He tried to increase the flow of water by turning the tap. Tiago noticed Rael's movement and approached, watching and waiting for Rael to turn on the tap. He also tries to open the tap fully, together with Rael, but they don't succeed. Tiago also enjoys the sensations caused by the drops spilling onto his hands. Alana approaches, takes the children away: "Not today! Not today!". Turn off the tap. "Everyone's sick, everyone's got a runny nose, it's not possible!" And she holds Rael and Tiago's hands, directing them to another place away from the tap. When Alana lets go of Rael's hand, he returns to the tap... Waving his arms in protest, wanting to interact with the falling droplets. Why not keep playing with the drops? Like a mirror, I see myself as a teacher at this moment and I think of how many times I've said "not today" and I see myself reflecting that we waste so much time determining children's today.*

*Rael persisted and ran back to meet the droplets...*

*Alana notices that I'm still interested and doesn't intervene anymore, she lets it happen, and I continue recording. Other babies approached, as if listening to the vibrations of the drops falling on Rael's hands. The intensity of his joy radiated out like a soft light, reaching other babies as well.*

*Vicente crouches down to feel the puddle of water that has formed; he uses a stick as if he were making a toy jump in the puddle. Luana, who is barefoot, feels the water on the ground with her feet, and with her hands, she feels the droplets falling and touching her skin.*

*Valeria approaches the tap, crouches down, watches the water fall, puts her hands on it again and again, stretching it out and picking it up. Igor also approaches... He is without one of his flip-flops, with his bare foot he feels the wet soil on the ground, then he lets the drops fall into his hands and with them outstretched, he leaves, taking the water with him, to the playhouse. Some arrive and others leave, and Rael continues on his way.*

*The droplets that keep falling, that invite you to touch them, to dive in. Even at such a tiny intensity, they drench, wet and leave marks on the bodies of those who experience it. They leave smiles, joys, and the desire to stay.*

*"It's 9:51, shall we go?" Alana says, "It's time for lunch! Let's wash our hands..." (Field diary — 04/05/2023)*

Water that wets, floods, bathes the body, the soul, invites you to surrender, to dive in. Drinking, refreshing, mixing, calming. Water that flows, delights, and comes together. Water. An invitation to draw in, to let yourself be moved by the flow, to feel, to spill, to hold, to absorb, to drench. In many ways, water is present in relationships at the daycare, becoming part of the babies' lives. Many situations involving active affects are perceived in the compositions of bodynature. We constantly see babies transgressing the logic of "not getting wet", whether by diving into the droplets from the tap or soaking themselves with water from their cups in the dining area. The encounter between these bodies at the daycare is filled with attention, smiles and joy, even if only for a short time. There is a becoming with water in this scene, which points to the possibility of the babies' expansion, which contrasts with the vision of water as a danger of illness, promoting the work of undressing/clothing the babies.

In the composition between Rael and the water, we can glimpse the effects of the encounter on him. The gradual rising and falling of his vitality affects (Stern, 1992), the calming that flows with the droplets: the insistence on wanting to continue with the intensities of the composition. The smiles elicited by the present moment and its intensities, and the affections experienced in the now, in the present, in immanence. From this perspective, cognition and affect are not separate, knowledge is produced on the level of affect.

Perceiving the micro-movements, the subtleties, the desires, is to attend to the plane of forces unfolding in the now, in the present moment. Stern (2004), when talking about the power of "now", brings up the concept of the present moment, the unity of the process of experience that can lead to change.

The composition of the nursery babies and the water invites us to think about a teaching practice that is grounded in the now, in the present moments we experience with the bodiesnature at the daycare. It

urges us to reflect on a pedagogy that values and observes the bodies with all the senses in their wholeness: being in the yard, relating to other modes of nature, is not merely spending linear time with the sole intention of the babies getting sunlight or running around. Valuing the present moments with pedagogical attentiveness means being available to the compositions that take place, perceiving the effects of affections on the bodiesnature.

### **Final Considerations**

Both the word body — which in current hegemonic thought is devalued in its potency, subjugated to the mind, from which the becoming-nature of its meaning has been captured; and the word nature — which, in common sense, is understood as separate and subjugated to the human and from which the becoming-body has been captured — are embedded in dualistic, fragmented conceptions, meanings that this research seeks to re-signify.

How can we bring the composition of body-mind-nature into our work? How can we give form to a thought of bodies in composition, in mutual agency, using words not already shaped by opposing meanings? When a word is written, it carries with it the representation of that thought. Even though it is not possible to fully represent the immanence of encounters through words, the word nature — when separated from the body, from the baby, the leaf, the adult, the stone... Raises deep questions. Faced with these questions, how can we continue writing about: the relationship between the 'child' and 'nature', if the child is nature? Is it possible to put together the words that, for so long, have represented this thinking that mutilates, divides, express this unity? The proposal of the term bodynature emerged as an attempt to address this very question.

For Deleuze and Guattari (2020b), philosophy is the art of creating concepts, and concepts are invented to solve problems, “[...] every concept refers to a problem” (p. 24). Thus, as tools, they are created in the face of chaos, in the face of events on the immanent plane of life: “[...] each concept cuts the event, cuts it in its own way. The greatness of a philosophy is measured by the nature of the events to which its concepts summon us, or which it makes us capable of purifying into concepts” (Deleuze, Guattari, 2020b, p. 43).

Inspired by Deleuze and Guattari's concept of the tool-concept, this research proposes the tool-word bodynature, so that we can continually think about the becoming-body that is in the expression nature and the becoming-nature that is in the expression body, in the composition of bodies. Thus, this research sought the encounter between body-nature within the daycare setting. Bodynature is composed, modified and actualized in encounters; each one is different in form and function, but equal in the horizontality of importance in the immanence of life.

Thus, bodynature implies that we are not separate from nature, that body and mind are inseparable, and that cognition is not separate from emotion or affections. Bodynature as a constant reminder to us

that the bodies in this research are manifestations of Nature, perhaps even a possible return of the becoming-body<sup>5</sup> to Nature, and of the becoming-nature to the Body. In this way, the research reveals the compositions of the bodiesnature, which took place mainly in the daycare yard. The compositions gave visibility to a world of intensities that are perceived by the multisensory bodies of babies, open to events, encounters, and affections.

The compositions between bodiesnature require the availability of the other, and in this entanglement, we can surrender ourselves in wholeness. Body-Nature, Expression-Language, Reason-Emotion are not separated in encounters, they are not separated in life. To affirm Bodynature in the daily life of Early Childhood Education, especially in daycare settings, is to affirm the power of bodies in encounters, to affirm the power of life itself.

Allowing, accompanying and supporting babies and young children to touch, feel textures and scents with their bodies is to enable compositions in the educational routine, it is to make possible the experience of the body that is Nature! This is an implication and an important indication for teaching, which is constituted through subtleties marked by affections and encounters. They are also marked by the willingness and openness to encounter, by a kind of listening that is multisensory, as it involves the body, when the body is understood in its wholeness.

There is a “listening” that happens on the skin, in the smell, in the speech, in the crying, in the laughter, in the sharing of feelings. It also happens in the difficulty, in the tension, in the effort to tune in. Adults and children available to affect and be affected involves learning that cannot be measured in pre-established roles, in representations, learning that lies in feeling, in the sharing of affections in the compositions of bodiesnature.

The pedagogical action in these moments can be understood from the perspective of the intentionality and attentiveness of adults in accompanying the babies’ movements, trusting in their agency during encounters, and trusting in the learning possibilities that emerge through relationships between bodies, learning that emerges as captures of emerging signs. It's about trusting babies' actions and making yourself available to them, supporting their movements, thus giving another dimension to the very meaning of the body. This is the challenge for teaching pointed out in this work. It's about understanding the affective, relational and sensitive centrality of pedagogical work in the daycare.

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## Notes

1 Martins (2009), Toledo (2010), Tiriba (2011; 2018), Rosa (2012), Fagionato-Ruffino (2012), Castelli (2019), Pomílio; Reis (2021).

- 2 <http://www.rio.rj.gov.br/dlstatic/10112/9129515/4229701/DeliberacaoCMEn30publ.pdf> According to CME Resolution n° 30/2019 of the Rio de Janeiro City Hall, children from zero to 18 months are considered babies, and children from 17 months to 3 years and 11 months are classified as very young children.
- 3 Law n° 5623/2013 establishes the Career, Positions, and Remuneration Plan for the employees of the Municipal Department of Education: <https://mail.camarara.rj.gov.br/Apl/Legislativos/contlei.nsf/3f9398ab330dbab883256d6b0050f039/d80e5d992b53402803257bf90059dc60?OpenDocument&ExpandSection=3.1>.
- 4 The Certificate of Ethical Review Submission (CAAE) number is 66733523.9.0000.5582.
- 5 According to Deleuze and Guattari (2020a, p. 67), “[...] becoming is the process of desire”, it is the act of becoming something else through the compositions that arise in the encounters between bodies — the field of lived experience: “Becoming is, from the forms one has, the subject one is, the organs one possesses or the functions one fulfills, to extract particles among which we establish relations of movement and rest, of speed and slowness — those closest to what we are in the process of becoming, and through which we become” (p. 67).

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