

Schooling and subversions of gender

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Abstract

The aim of this essay is to discuss bodies and discourses that question and confront gender norms and all possibilities of control of bodies in formative institutions. In order to do so, we analyzed three field research scenes, performed in different times and spaces. We show that they take place in the formative practices and spaces, there are several areas of subversion to norms and we face the control of bodies, as well as to show that these are dispute places, that in our research we do not generally privilege the discourses which subvert.

Keywords: Body. Formative Institutions. Subversions of Gender.

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Escolarização e subversões de gênero

Escolarización y Subversiones del Género

Resumo

O objetivo desse ensaio é discutir sobre corpos e discursos que questionam e enfrentam as normas de gênero e todas as possibilidades de controle dos corpos nas instituições formativas. Para tanto, analisamos três cenas de pesquisa de campo, realizadas em diferentes tempos e espaços. Mostramos que nas práticas formativas e nos espaços que elas acontecem, há diversos espaços de subversões às normas e enfrentamos ao controle dos corpos, bem como para mostrar que esses lugares são de disputas, que geralmente, nas nossas pesquisas não privilegamos os discursos que subvertem.

Palavras-Chave: Corpo. Instituições Formativas. Subversões de Gênero.

Resumen

El propósito de este ensayo es discutir cuerpos y discursos que cuestionan y se enfrentan a las normas de género y todas las posibilidades de control de los órganos de las instituciones educativas. Por lo tanto, se analizaron tres escenarios de investigación de campo, llevado a cabo en diferentes tiempos y espacios. Se demuestra que en las prácticas de formación y los espacios que suceden, hay varias reglas espacios subversión y se enfrentan al control de los cuerpos, y para mostrar que estos lugares son los conflictos, por lo general, en nuestra investigación no hace discursos de privilegio que subvierten.

Palabras clave: Cuerpo. Instituciones de formación. Subversiones del género.

In this text we propose to discuss some concerns and some limits on how we do our research on gender and sexual diversity. In recent years we have developed research inspired by a poststructuralist approach, in which we analyze representations, senses and meanings concerning body, gender and sexualities in the field of education, especially students and teachers. In this process, we are accustomed to focus our analysis on their meanings, the ways of insertion of these themes in school curricula and vocational training, in the daily experiences of classrooms and in other spaces of educational socialization, generally failing to identify cases of subversion of gender or the individual policies of facing the heteronormative norms of bodies governing.

According to Miskolci (2007), heteronormativity refers to a set of determinations that regulate practice, acts and desires based on a model that aims at the reproduction of the species, the heterosexual model. According to the author the heteronormativity:

Is a set of prescriptions that ground social processes of regulation and control, even those that do not relate to people of the opposite sex (...) that demonstrates their goal: to form all to be heterosexual or to organize their lives from the model supposedly Coherent, superior and "natural" heterosexuality. (MISKOLCI, 2009, p. 156-157, our translation).

The school and the university as social spaces are also places where these hegemonic discourses circulate concerning issues related to sexuality such as the logic of the binarism of bodies: man-woman, where everything that departs from the model is considered abnormal and is repressed and these "abnormal" practices such as homosexuality are put aside at school. To Louro (2008) the heteronormative discourse has functioned as sexuality regulator, showing that despite the increasing presence of sexual diversity in various social fields, including at school, the normality discourse remains, including certain subjects and excluding others.

The latest research developed at the Center for Interdisciplinary Studies and Research on Women and Gender

Social Relations (NEPIMG), linked to the Federal University of Sergipe, of which we are part, point out some pertinent questions to think about the field of gender studies and sexual diversity in education: a) gender and sexuality issues are silenced in official documents (DIAS; OLIVEIRA, 2015); b) we still face resistances in the materiality of the inclusion of the body, gender and sexuality approach in the curricula and in the formative practices (DIAS, 2014; DIAS, 2015); c) the bodies produced and reproduced in schools are generalized (DIAS; CRUZ, 2015; DIAS, et al, 2015) and d) gender stereotypes are being deconstructed from new meanings (DIAS, 2015).

We know that these studies and others produced by NEPIMG collaborate to make these themes visible as empirical and knowledge producing fields. However, from post-structuralist and post-critical readings we are always seeking to deconstruct ourselves as researchers. This is not an easy task, but possible, considering that we are always looking for possibilities of deconstruction and unlearning. Also because it is believed that the work with narratives in the field of education can contribute to research about the teachers / students and to research with the teachers / students or to research in the educational institutions and with the educational institutions, according to the ideas of Lima, Geraldi and Geraldi (2015).

With our latest research, we have realized how important it is to expand research methods, to get closer to the participants, to give them new forms of interaction so that we can get the most out of their subjectivities. Perhaps these new postures that the researchers begin to assume, contribute significantly to bring up the discourses of the participants that disturb, erase, rip the norms of gender based on heteronormativity. In order to do so, we believe that a greater approximation with them is necessary, in the perspective of researching these bodies, with these bodies, seeking to disclose and give voice to those participants who, for a long time, were anonymous or excluded from the production of knowledge, both as producing agents and as research subjects.

This is the main challenge of this text: to work with bodies and discourses that question and confront gender

norms and all possibilities of control of bodies. In order to do so, we want to return to some field research scenes, carried out in different times and spaces, to show that in the formative practices and spaces they take place there are several spaces of subversion to norms and we face the control of bodies, as well as to show that these are dispute places, which generally, in our researches we do not privilege the speeches they subvert.

We start from the premise that bodies are existential, situated and temporal (LE BRETON, 2007). The bodies go through processes of resignification, producing new meanings, new forms of representation, new discourses, in accordance with the social, cultural and educational environment in which they are inserted. For this reason, bodies present themselves as problematic objects, both in terms of their definition, and in epistemological terms, insofar as they cover the most varied problems and disciplines, with very close links with education. A body in performance, at the border, such as those of transvestites and transsexuals in particular, is a crucial object of these resignification processes.

The scenes we present in this text have the purpose of contributing to the unlearning of gender and contribute to the development of gender reassignments, beyond the masculine and feminine, proposing other possibilities of being and living their sexualities. They also propose the need to destabilize standardizations, classifications and hierarchies in the field of education. Thus, as they arise, we will explain their use, locate the spaces and their participants.

Scene 1

In one of the field observation sessions it was possible to verify that one of the teachers attracted the attention of a six year old student, a first year elementary school student. He then made the following comment to the researcher: "Teacher, you do not see that boy there with strange woman manners. I think he'll be a fag! But, by the end of the school year, I'll take those manners away from him." Perplexed by the expression of prejudice in the commenta-

ry the researcher asks: "How do you know the student will be a homosexual? Just because of the representation of female traits? "The teacher was categorical:" In my classes I do not tolerate this kind of deviation, since boys have to become men and not anything else "(DIAS, CRUZ, 2015, 36).

Scene 2

In one of the moments of observation in research activities carried out with a class of 3rd year of elementary school, a student called the attention of four students who were there to develop the theme on masculinities and femininities through directed activities. His mannerisms, voice and way of speaking, as well as the make-up used, impacted the actions that were being developed with students between the ages of eight and nine. Immediately, the teacher referred to the student with the staff and said: I live a difficult situation because I have to keep controlling student X all the time in my classroom. I say that this is not how you behave and what you talk about. When he arrives with makeup I make him wash his face, but it's no use. He confronts me and puts it back. In the yard he is always being "poked fun", but do you think he worries? He does not even care, and he stays there in the yard. It seems that he is always testing us, to see what we do (sic) (DIAS, CRUZ, 2015, 37).

Scene 3

On her first day in high school a transsexual teacher met a student at the water fountain. This, upon perceiving a transvestite, a transsexual, a strange body, deviant from what femininity meant to him, soon publicly questioned her: "Come on, what are you doing here?" The transsexual student replied, "Like every other student, I'm here to study." The student continued to question her: "But what are you doing that is not in the "Cruz da Donzela?" - referring to a village where transvestites prostitute themselves, located near the city of Malhada dos Bois, in BR 101 (road), countryside of Sergipe. At once the transsexual student replied, "No, instead of being at Cruz da Donzela, I had the courage to go through the excluding high school, to suffer prejudice, but I still managed to get here. And today I'm a student just like you."

Scenes 1 and 2 were taken from the research “Production / reproduction of bodies generated in school practices” funded by the CNPq, held in the first semester of 2015, with 33 participants (23 students: 21 women and two men) of the Bachelor’s Degree In Pedagogy of the Federal University of Sergipe, Campus Itabaiana (SE) and ten teachers who work in early childhood education and in the initial years of two public schools of the Municipal Network of Itabaiana (SE). Observation sessions were held during the follow-up to the workshops on the Gender and Sexuality Education and Diversity Project linked to the Initiation to Teaching Program (PIBID) developed by graduates in order to capture the experiences and positioning of teachers regarding the students’ work. It was from these spaces of observation in the field and through conversations with teachers from the institution that it was possible to collect testimonies such as those exposed in scenes 1 and 2.

Scene 3 was taken from the research “The formative process and the professional performance of a transsexual teacher”, funded by CAPES, in which it was sought to identify the policies and practices of regulation and subjectivation of the body and gender present in the field of education. A qualitative approach was used, through a narrative interview in the second semester of 2015, in which a transsexual teacher exposes her experiences of violence and suffering, achievements and struggles as a student and teacher.

What do these scenes have in common? What is relevant to us in them? What is our purpose in discussing them in this text? With our post-structuralist readings, we have learned that it is not interesting to find all the answers, rather than to open up possibilities for debate or give clues to readers. Well, having it explained, the scenes propose spaces of subversion of the gender norms and the confrontation of the control or schooling of the bodies, in which the bodies of student X and the transsexual teacher disturbed the constructions and imaginary of masculine and feminine identifications.

The teachers participating in the research of scenes 1 and 2, use normative resources in their practices, specifically

regarding the valorization of masculinities and femininities. These examples express the dynamics reproduced in the classrooms by the teachers regarding sexuality. Gender stereotypes organize relations and pedagogy in school based on the control of sexuality, the biological binary scheme, “being a man” and “being a woman.”

Scene 3 demonstrates how genders are constructed, guided by heteronormativity, to distinguish the bodies and places of men from those of women in society, excluding those who do not fit in these patterns or those on the border (BUTLER, 2010), as the body of a transsexual. A queer body is a strange body with “deviant” sexuality, that is, a “way of thinking and being that defies the regulatory norms of society, which assumes the discomfort of ambiguity, of in ‘between places,’ of the indefinable. Queer is a strange body that bothers, disturbs, provokes and fascinates” (LOURO, 2015, p. 7-8, our translation). The transsexual teacher erased representations of what it is supposed to be a man and woman in that place, it was a body that needed to be civilized and governed.

Teachers and the university student disregard the perspective of masculinity and femininity as plural and socially constructed, and not just as something of nature. However, it is necessary to question which discourses are crossed in the attitudes of the teachers and the student, since they can reproduce a biological discourse, in which we only have two possibilities of being, which is either a man, or a woman. Also, they can reproduce a religious discourse in which a man is born for a woman and a woman is born for a man, excluding other possibilities of living sexuality; And an institutional discourse in which the male and female bodies must be represented on the basis of biological characteristics.

According to Goellner (2010, p. 28, our translation), to denaturalize the body, considering it “as something produced in and by culture is both a challenge and a necessity”. It is necessary to destabilize normative discourses, processes of domination and sexuality devices that tend to educate the bodies and produce differences, oppression, denials, exclusions.

The characters in the three scenes also have bodies that allow for subversion. Likewise, resistance forms are observed in the scenes, actions to confront these norms, by the positioning of the student X, giving materiality to the meanings, resignifying his body, his desire and his sexuality, as well as by the insertion and permanence of the transsexual teacher .

According to Louro (2015), we can not lose sight of the fact that sexual “minorities” are more visible today, and therefore the struggle with conservative groups becomes more fierce, this notoriety, brings two outcomes, greater acceptance of sexual plurality in some social sectors and increased consumption of their cultural products, on the other hand traditional sectors increase the attacks in campaigns for resumption of the values of the traditional family. In this scenario, a great challenge is imposed: to deal with new models of sexuality based on binary systems. For now,

The certainties escape, the models are proved useless, the formulas are inoperative. But it is possible to staunch the issues. There is no way to ignore the “new” practices, the “new” subjects, their constestations to the established. The normalizing vocation of education is threatened. The longing for canon and trustworthy goals is shaken. The immediatist and practical tradition leads to question: what to do? The apparent urgency of the issues does not allow any response to be anticipated; It is necessary to know the conditions that enabled the emergence of these subjects and practices. (LOURO, 2015, p.29, our translation).

The teachers, as we saw in the scenes, are perplexed in front of bodies that are outside and at the border, realizing that the control mechanisms no longer bring the same desired answers to the standardization of bodies as they had until just recently.

As we said at the beginning of this text, we are accustomed to opportunistize, problematize and criticize the participants who tend to develop a pedagogy of the body, having as main connection to the normalization of bodies and with more intense action those who flee

from the binarism of the masculine and feminine. This discourse of masculinities and femininities was constructed, according to Le Breton (2007), to distinguish the bodies, the gender and the places of men from those of women in the society, excluding those that do not fit into these molds. Bodies are standardized with well-defined roles because:

The naturalization of the body is a social and symbolic phenomenon that reverberates in the socialization of gender from the beginning of life, proposing senses and meanings of fixed masculinity and femininity for boys and girls, men and women. (DIAS et al, 2015, p.135, our translation).

Since the body, understood as a social and cultural phenomenon, is charged with meaning, it is mutable, and obeys the normalizations that delimit its experience in social and existential space. According to Le Breton (2007) the discourse on the masculine and feminine body is loaded with judgments of sociocultural value; And femininity and masculinity were constructed to delimit the bodies and the place of man and woman in society. But these immutable essences of masculine and feminine, allied with male domination and rooted in the patriarchal family, are collapsing, today people have behaviors that were formerly attributed to the other sex, femininity is manifold, masculinity as well.

In fact, we really have to develop several criticisms of this work that some educational institutions or their agents use to persecute or school the bodies of students. However, in these same surveys we do not see those participants who face and tear these heteronormative norms, going into the field of disputes. We do not tell their history, their strategies of permanence, how they experience the relations of power and micro powers, their sufferings, their meanings of what it is to be in these spaces and, especially, how they perceive themselves in relation to others.

The homosexual subject was invented in the nineteenth century, before that the sexual relations between persons of the same sex were denominated of sodomy,

being a sinful activity to which any person could perform. From that moment homosexuality was categorized as deviance and the subjects exposed to social rejection and violence. Since 1970, organizations, magazines, articles, and artistic manifestations have begun to emerge more expressively. Criticizing the heterosexual model, which is required as a parameter of normality. In Brazil, this movement has been strengthened since 1980 and the theme has become an academic issue. "Greater visibility of gays and lesbians no longer upset the status quo as before." (LOURO, 2015, p.35, our translation).

But even in the 1980s, AIDS transforms this scenario, strengthening the homophobia that was latent in society. All over the world, the conservative reaction "has had political consequences that have never been overcome, and also in the way people have learned about themselves, about sexuality, and the way they experience their sexual lives and affections to this day." (MISKOLCI, 2013, p. 23, our translation). There was also the creation of networks of solidarity formed not only by the affected individuals, but also their families. The discussion about homosexuality broadens, as well as the number of activist groups.

The movements become more plural, some continue in the struggle for the recognition of their rights, seeking equality; Others seek to challenge traditional gender and sexual boundaries; And those who decide to live the ambiguity of living on the border. It is in this context that the Queer movement arises, bringing a critique of heteronormativity, where some homosexuals are accepted, as long as they follow the norms, and social rejection is pressured on other bodies considered abnormal because they do not fit the heteroreproductive model, that is, the Queer is the refusal to establish gender and sexual boundaries that turn bodies into normal and abnormal (MISKOLCI, 2013). This new gender policy has as its central axis the struggle to deconstruct the cultural norms and conventions that constitute the subjects in the perspective of the disciplinary power and no longer the struggle for freedom that presupposes an oppressive power.

It is necessary to go beyond showing these normative actions of these institutions, at least of those that perform

them, it is necessary to problematize them, questioning the uses of the regulatory norms of biopower and of the governability in the bodies in these spaces. So,

(...) power ceases to be something easily associated with someone or an institution, the king or the presidency, for example, and is seen as a strategic situation in a given society at a certain time. We move from a theory of power to the challenge of dealing with it as relational, historical and culturally variable, that is, through an analytic. (MISKOLCI, 2013, p. 28, our translation).

This perspective is the one that copes with the contemporary reality, since the power is everywhere inciting the subjects to rotate according to the hegemonic powers. To Foucault (2015), biopower is exercised in the flesh, in the biological, in the body, through disciplinary mechanisms, such as control of the so-called "mannerisms" and the use of objects, in the separation of boys and girls to perform certain actions, On banning the use of the social name and use of the female toilet for transvestites and transsexuals. The latter is generally used as a "technology" of gender construction and discrimination (MISKOLCI, 2013), because in denying a transvestite or a transsexual the use of the female toilet, the institution uses the architectural order for government of bodies, in managing and conducting their conduct, in an attempt to reframe them in the place where they should be.

In this line of reflection, we are interested in discussing the strategies that these students and teachers develop in order to cope with the regulatory norms of biopower and the governance of their bodies. In this respect Butler (2014) indicates that gender, being a norm, operates in social practices from an implicit normalization, being difficult to perceive, since they are subtle and more perceptible in the effects it produces. So the norm attributes intelligibility to the social field and normalizes it, but creates a paradox, since when something that is outside the norm and yet remains being signified within its parameters, or better:

Gender is the apparatus by which the production and normalization of masculine and feminine manifest along with the interstitial,

hormonal, chromosomal, physical, and performative forms that gender assumes. To suppose that gender always and exclusively means the “masculine” and “feminine” matrices is to lose sight of the critical point that this coherent and binary production is contingent, that it had a cost, and that gender permutations that do not fit into that binarism are both part of the genre as its most normative example. (BUTLER, 2014, p. 253, our translation).

Thus, the genre itself gives the conditions for changes in the criteria of standardization from the deconstruction of its criteria and norms, without the need to account for how many genera can exist and how they should be called. It is important to note that this standard produces subjects who reproduce it naturally in their daily lives.

An example of such gender deconstruction can be seen in scene 2 where student X was nine years old during the research and made up for classes, although his teacher always forced him to remove it, he would put it on again. It is precisely this coping action that contributes to the deconstruction and weakening of gender norms. The body posture, being in the courtyard “being held” by other students and remaining there is a perception that the courtyard is a place of dispute and that as a student, that place is also for your use. Not to be testing, as his teacher told us, but to disturb the senses and meanings that other students and teachers had about what it is to be a boy and to be a girl.

The student X in the game of disputes becomes empowered, when he stays in the classroom and in the courtyard, speaking, and shouting: “I exist. I want the right to be here too. I am attacked.” The power of this speech is very strong. It is a speech that goes on to test the professionals of education, proposing new positions. With this, the student X also denounces an idea of perversity in the school.

The school becomes perverse for blacks, fat people, homosexuals, transvestites, transsexual people, who are outside or do not represent an idealized body. These go through the optics of having to live in a process of constitution of subjectivity, built and marked with iron

and fire in shame, that is, who can stand to live a life marked by shame. Therefore, we are wasting experiences of learning in diversity with these students and teachers, as well as thinking of people beyond a binomial issue. So that the biological does not pacify bodies in social relations, in the positions of those who earn more and earn less, whether you are black or white, transvestite, transsexual. Depending on your body, the marks it has, the person will have positions, priorities and move forward more or less. Therefore, the posture of the student X, probably without knowing it yet, contributes to this reflection.

In this perspective, we want to resume the discussion about the posture of the transsexual teacher in scene 3, since she also proposes disputes and confrontations with heteronormativity. When questioned about her rightful place or the place that society has proposed as being natural to her, prostitution, she also perceives the university as a place of disputes, in which depending on her actions, she could be excluded. Of course it was not easy to get there, in this same research, the teacher told us all her process of exclusionary formation, of homophobic violence that she experienced throughout her school career. But the dream of being a teacher made it possible for a personal maturity and questioning of these school experiences, which did not give the opportunity to know her, nor to be valued as a being that influences and is influenced.

We know that there are very few transsexual people who can reach the university, perhaps because they have been marked by shame and gender violence. Although they are few, we have to empower trans people to believe they can be in college and also reduce the stigma that the place for these people is prostitution.

The transsexual teacher did at that moment a political act of breaking the insult, for calling her a transvestite or transsexual would not be the greatest of her problems, since she herself presented herself as a transsexual. This action is what we call queer politics, that is, this was the way the teacher met to produce a reaction of pride and an impressive body politics.

From this narrative, we can see that the discourse of heteronormativity and the determination and fixity of sex-gender, reproduced by the student, comes into the picture. By imposing the transsexual teacher a place other than the university, as well as proposing to her behavior, the deviant status of the norm, an “aberration.” In this case diverging from gender norms would “produce the aberrant example that regulatory (medical, psychiatric and legal, just to name a few) powers can quickly exploit to leverage the rationality of their own continued regulatory zeal” (BUTLER, 2014, p. 267, our translation).

Society manufactures discourses that construct regimes of truths, that is, “the kinds of speeches it welcomes and functions as true” (FOUCAULT, 2015, p.52, our translation). In the case of scene 3, the student ratifies a discourse of truth: that of heteronormativity and the natural and linear correspondence of body / sex-gender / identity, creating strategies of control and banishment of that deviant body, in order to exclude the representativeness of the transsexual body. However, the discussion about how a “trans” body becomes a “strange” body in the educational field can be an important artifact of change, insofar as these bodies propose to the agents of these educational institutions questions of the hegemonic and imaginary representations of Masculinity and femininity.

During the research, the transsexual teacher who gave us the narrative interview alerted us to the idea that the dissemination of a discourse against homosexuality and transsexuality goes beyond the walls of educational institutions, it crosses other social microsystems that utter speeches of vigilance, punishment and exclusion of deviant bodies. In addition, it is not the mere presence of a transsexual person which disturbs, but the label “trans” destabilizes the beliefs in the natural sex-gender determination and heteronormative patterns. She intuitively feels that her body is not even perceived as “trans”, so it would not be the body creating the strangeness, but the transsexual word and the transgender person’s political label. This does disturb, deconstructs, proposes unlearning.

Louro (2010) believes that this differentiated presentation is made as an important criticism to the conventions

of our contemporary society. That comes to problematize and the fact that should interest us is that they are also members of the same society and we should at least pay attention to them. The author proposes that we stop thinking about the practices of these subjects as a problem, but think at a time when binary logic no longer works, think about a time of multiplicities of subjects, abandoning the discourse that hierarchizes and marginalizes.

At the same time, those who cross, subvert or challenge the frontier of the genre often use irony and exaggeration even as evidence of the arbitrariness of the regulatory norms of gender, showing their invented and cultural character, so these “constantly watched frontiers of genres and sexuality, parody criticism can be profoundly subversive” (LOURO, 2015, p.20). This is how these bodies at or near the border, considered outside the norm, cause strangeness and discomfort.

It fits right here the idea of Miskolci (2013), about abjection, that is, something that is polluting, nauseating, that causes horror or repulsion. This logic of abjection operates in a way that people seek to extirpate what is considered socially abnormal. From this idea, we can understand how violence arises against those who make explicit the instability of the genre.

The experience of abjection derives from the negative judgment about homoerotic desire, but especially when it leads to the breaking of normative standards such as the social demand that gays and lesbians be discreet, read, do not appear to be gay or lesbian, still, that does not shift genres or modify the bodies, which often makes feminine boys, masculine girls and especially transvestites and transgender victims of violence. (MISKOLCI, 2013, p. 44, our translation).

Thus, for example, gay men who surrender socialization by taking the hegemonic lifestyle for themselves are more accepted. The homosexual, in order to be accepted, must meet expectations regarding gender and maintain a lifestyle that does not call heterosexuality an undisputed model. Individuals who refuse to perform

such rituals subvert the norm and become abject, as the students brought in the scenes presented, but also problematize and expose their invented character.

At the conclusion of this essay, we want to return to our choice of discussing the narratives of these participants, because we perceive that something has changed in us, something touched us, it has awakened us, as Larrosa (2002, p. 21) tells us: experience is “What happens to us, what happens to us, what touches us. Many things happen every day, but at the same time, almost nothing happens to us. “We believe that these bodies have this power; the power to disturb, destabilize, to propose deconstructions and unlearning.

Although for some time now we are immersed in gender studies and sexual diversity, developing research and proposing interventions, we will not be the same. The research exercise is transforming us, and field experiences like these propose deconstructions in our conceptions of why, how and what research for. From the experience with these students, we affirm the importance of dialogical research, to bring to the academic debate and the production of educational knowledge voices such as those presented in scenes, invisible and unrecognized in this field. This is, in fact, the greatest contribution of this text.

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