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A silent message is also a message

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Abstract *"Dammed taxi cab!"* A twelve year old student wrote these words in the margins of a questionnaire in school concerning psychosocial well-being. Within this paper they will serve as a point of departure for the discussion. Can the messages found on the sides of the squares intended for an X in a questionnaire be considered non-messages? Or are these expressions indeed messages that are made silent and therefore can be considered silent messages? Then one might wonder what the meanings of the silent messages are that often occurs in questionnaires? Can, or maybe should, we take notice of these silent messages? According to Polanyi every human being has silent and unexpressed dimensions within themselves, which acknowledge situations where we recognise that we know more than we can explain. This is also stressed by Merleau-Ponty, who argued that something exists beyond what is said, and Bateson emphasised that a non-message is also a message – the silence tells us something. Within this paper we will highlight and discuss the significance of silent messages of communication in general, and especially in questionnaires.

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