



## The method of equality: Jacotot and the experience of universal teaching method in the context of French Revolution<sup>1</sup>

O método da igualdade: Jacotot e a experiência do ensino universal no contexto da Revolução Francesa

El método de la igualdad: jacotot y la experiencia de la enseñanza universal en el contexto de la revolución francesa

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### Resumo

Esse texto tem como propósito apresentar a vida e obra do fundador do Ensino Universal, Joseph Jacotot (1770-1840); bem como analisar os aspectos históricos e filosóficos de seu método educativo, a fim de apresentar uma compreensão preliminar de suas ideias acerca da educação nos anos iniciais do século XIX, em que se fortalecia o pensamento pedagógico que deu origem a educação moderna. O método do Ensino Universal, também conhecido como método da emancipação intelectual, se baseia nos princípios de que: 1) Todos os homens têm inteligência igual; 2) Todo homem recebeu de Deus a faculdade de ser capaz de se instruir; 3) Podemos ensinar o que não sabemos; 4) Tudo está em tudo; e, se oporá ao pensamento educativo da época por acreditar na opinião de que todas as inteligências são iguais e de que não se atingirá a igualdade entre os homens, pretendida pela Revolução Francesa, com a criação de instituições de ensino e com a formação de mestres explicadores, mas somente dando a cada homem o poder de reconhecer sua capacidade intelectual. Esta pesquisa se baseia no referencial teórico do materialismo histórico-dialético.

**Palavras-chave:** Revolução Francesa. Ensino Universal. Igualdade. Pensamento pedagógico.

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## Abstract

This paper aims to present life and work of the founder of Universal Teaching Method, Joseph Jacotot (1770 - 1840), as well as to analyze the historical and philosophical aspects of his educative method in order to present a preliminary comprehension about his ideas concerning early years education in XIX century, when the pedagogical thinking that originated modern education had consolidated. The Universal Teaching Method, also known as intellectual emancipation method, is based on the following principles: 1) all man have equal intelligence; 2) every man has received from God the ability to instruct himself; 3) we can teach what we don't know; 4) everything is in everything. This method, which objected the pedagogical thinking of that period, considered that all intelligences are equal and no equality among men will be reached - as the French Revolution intended - with the establishments of teaching institutions and formation of tutors, but only by providing every man the power of recognizing their own intellectual capacity. The theoretical framework of this research is the historical and dialectical materialism method.

**Keywords:** French Revolution. Universal Teaching. Equality. Pedagogical Thinking.

## Resumen

Este texto tiene como propósito presentar la vida y obra del fundador de la Enseñanza Universal, Joseph Jacotot (1770-1840); así como analizar los aspectos históricos y filosóficos de su método educativo, a fin de presentar una comprensión preliminar de sus ideas acerca de la educación en los años iniciales del siglo XIX, en que se fortalecía el pensamiento pedagógico que dio origen a la educación moderna. El método de la Enseñanza Universal, también conocido como método de la emancipación intelectual, se basa en los principios de que: 1) Todos los hombres tienen inteligencia igual; 2) Todo hombre recibió de Dios la facultad de ser capaz de instruirse; 3) Podemos enseñar lo que no sabemos; 4) Todo está en todo; idea que se opuso al pensamiento educativo de la época por creer en la opinión de que todas las inteligencias son iguales. Defendía que no se alcanzará la igualdad entre los hombres, pretendida por la Revolución Francesa, con la creación de instituciones de enseñanza y con la formación de maestros explicadores, pero sólo dando a cada hombre el poder de reconocer su capacidad intelectual. Esta investigación se basa en el referencial teórico del materialismo histórico-dialéctico.

**Palabras clave:** Revolución Francesa. Enseñanza Universal. La igualdad. Pensamiento pedagógico.

## Introduction

In 1818 Joseph Jacotot, a conscientious professor and reader of French literature at the University of Louvain, experienced an intellectual adventure that had become the fundamental basis of his teaching method, discovered by chance. This text aims to present the life and work of the founder of Universal Teaching; as well as analyzing the historical and philosophical aspects of his method.

Universal Teaching, also called by Rancière (2013) the method of the will, the method of emancipation, universal method or method of chance, aims to promote intellectual emancipation and defend the hypothesis that anyone can learn what they want without the need of a master explainer. It is a method based on Panecastic philosophy, created by Jacotot himself, and seeks the whole of human intelligence in each intellectual manifestation, stating that all bits of intelligence are equal.

Jacotot's method lived with a profusion of different methods, at the crucial moment when French society signed its institutions and laws in order to guarantee public instruction, to transform the condition of the ignorant and uncivilized man into an enlightened citizen. The Universal Teaching followed the opposite of this thought in defending that one does not obtain a free and equal people with laws and constitutions (CASTILLO, 2013, p.75) and this would make it different from other methods. So much so that when asked by the French Minister of Public Instruction on how the government should organize instruction, Jacotot replied that the government owed nothing as to the instruction, it is no longer due to the people what they can do for themselves (*ibid.*).

Although forgotten in the museum of pedagogical novelties, being rescued only from 1987 by the political philosopher, Jacques Rancière (TONIATTI, 2015, p. 45), the method of Universal Teaching had a wide reach in the nineteenth century, extending to several regions. Many adherents of the method have erected themselves, but also, as is to be expected, there are harsh criticisms from academics, journalists, and societies of sages of the time.

The importance of trying to understand the relationship between the life and work of Joseph Jacotot is justified in order to understand what place is being spoken. Likewise, analyzing the main historical and philosophical aspects of the method discovered by him it will make us recompose the thinking of this character who stood firmly against the educational belief of his time; based, according to him, on methods of unreason, the work of a superior reason that determines the sacrifice of a reason, supposedly inferior, in the name of future equality between both. (RANCIÈRE, 2013).

To fulfill our intent, we will be based theoretically on academic productions that bring in themselves pedagogical/philosophical reflections on the method of Jacotot's Universal Teaching, such as: RANCIÈRE (2013); CASTILLO (2013); JÓDAR E GÓMEZ (2003); CERLETTI (2003); TONIATTI (2015) among other authors. These productions give an account of the depth that the method of Universal Teaching carries by touching on the fundamental point of education: equality. Is it an objective to be achieved by instruction? Or, as Jacotot defended, unless we take it as a starting point, we will never reach it?

Here we want to think together with the theorists, the categorical points raised by the Jacotot's method, such as emancipation, equality, explanation, ignorance, knowledge, etc. In this sense, we try to answer the double question: Who was Joseph Jacotot, and what are the main historical and philosophical aspects of his method?

In principle, polling of scientific investigations already carried out on the object in question were established as methodological procedures, available in the Capes journals (Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel). We also seek to make a

critical analysis of the readings, intercrossing relevant information contained in the productions. The research was also carried out on the Socio-historical context of the time, considering that in the different periods of the history of society, we also found different ideas and social theories, as well as different opinions and political institutions. Making it essential to understand that this fact is explained by the diverse conditions of the material life of society, in the different periods of social development (STALIN, 1979, p. 29).

Understanding the ideas of Jacotot, so dissonant from his historical era, is only possible by integrating them into his life and behavior, knowing that this behavior is not determined only by the individual, but, above all, by the social group and by the contingencies of the political and social events to which the subject is subjected. Jacotot intended to break with an educational belief that in the eyes of his contemporaries was unbreakable.

In order to understand its specificity as intellectual we based on the study of Sirinelli (2003), to characterize Jacotot as a cultural mediator, belonging to the group of "alarm clocks" that, "without being obligatorily known or without having always acquired a reputation related to their real role, they end up representing a ferment for the following intellectual generations, exerting a cultural and even political influence" (SIRINELLI, 2003, p. 246).

### **Life and work of Joseph Jacotot**

Born in March 1770 in the French city of Dijon and died in 1840 in the city of Paris; Jean-Joseph Jacotot served as a teacher in several areas of knowledge. He was a lawyer, a military man in the service of the French Revolution, and a pedagogue (TONIATTI, 2015, p. 45).

Jacotot attended Dijon school and at the age of nineteen, he was appointed professor of humanities, later he studied law and mathematics on his own. He also organized the youth federation of Dijon in 1788, uniting it with those of other provinces in defense of the Revolution. He was also elected captain of an artillery company in the Côte d'Or battalion, a French department where his city was located. Later he was a substitute director of the Polytechnic School in 1794 and, in Dijon, he held the chair of Method of Sciences. According to Toniatti: "Jacotot has since innovated in his pedagogy [even without the knowledge], motivating students to take a position and argue freely in debates that he limited himself to enunciating". (Ibid., 2015, p. 48)

Toniatti, citing Jacotot's biography, written by Achille Guillard (1799-1876) in 1860, explains that during his lifetime, the creator of Universal Teaching published several works that were repeatedly reissued and controversial in different countries. In 1818 he published *Enseignement universel - Langue maternelle* [Universal Teaching - Mother tongue], dedicated to the teaching of French and where he laid the foundations of his method; this work was translated twice into German. In 1824 he published *Langue étrangère* [Foreign Language] in which he dealt with the teaching of Latin, in the same year he published *Musique, dessin et peinture* [Music, drawing and painting]. In 1828 it is the turn of *Mathématiques* [Mathematics]. Then, in 1835 Jacotot published in *Paris Droit et Philosophie panécastique* [Law and panecástica philosophy]. Even after his death, his two sons published *Mélanges Posthumes* [Posthumous Mixtures] in 1841. In addition, several articles were published in the *Journal de l'Émancipation Intellectuelle* [Journal of Intellectual Emancipation], (...) from 1829 to 1842" and also in the *Journal de Philosophie panécastique* [Jornal de filosofia panecástica]. (TONIATTI, 2015, p. 50-51).

For Sirinelli (2003), reconstituting intellectual itineraries presents problematic, since trajectories naturally require clarification, marking, and interpretation, without falling into generalization. Glimpsing aspects of Joseph Jacotot's itinerary, although preliminarily, allows us to perceive the structures of sociability in which the intellectual was involved.

## The years of Revolution

Jacotot lived among the countries of France, Holland, and Belgium. He was a contemporary of the French Revolution, a social and political process that took place in France between 1789 and 1799, whose main implications were: the fall of Louis XVI, the abolition of the monarchy and the proclamation of the Republic. More than that, through the Revolution:

France has provided the vocabulary and themes of liberal and radical-democratic politics for most of the world. France set the first great example, the concept, and vocabulary of nationalism. France provided the legal codes, the model of technical and scientific organization, and the metric system of measures for most countries. The ideology of the modern world reached the ancient civilizations that had until then resisted European ideas initially through the French influence. This was the work of the French Revolution [...] (HOBBSAWN, 1981, pp. 71-72)

The 19th century became known as the "era of democratic revolution", but according to historian Hobsbawn, the French Revolution presented the most profound consequences of all contemporary phenomena to it, this for three reasons: 1) it occurred in the most populous state and Europe's powerful; 2) It was a mass social revolution, unlike predecessor and even successor revolutions to it; 3) It was, among all contemporary revolutions, the only ecumenical one. For these reasons his ideas managed to revolutionize the world, so much so that they had repercussions in several countries, they had provoked the uprisings that had brought to the liberation of Latin America after 1808. Its influence gained universal proportion since it provided the standard for all subsequent revolutionary movements, their ideas being incorporated into modern socialism and communism. (ibid., 1981, p. 72-73).

It is clear that the Revolution was not a unitary movement and organized in defense of equal interests, the mass of poor workers, was in it because of hunger and oppression, were practical and urgent reasons. They could not act independently, so they followed the leaders of the Revolution, and these belonged to the other class: they were the bourgeois, a cohesive group, with well-formulated general ideas, those of classical liberalism; inherited from the philosophers and economists of the eighteenth century, that for Hobsbawn: "they can be justly held responsible for the Revolution. It would have occurred without them; but they probably constituted the difference between a simple collapse of an old regime and its rapid and effective replacement by a new one". (ibid., p. 77).

Boto, in his *The School of the New Man* (1996), also highlights that the Enlightenment Movement prevailed in Europe in the 18th century by defending the superiority of reason over faith and representing the worldview of the bourgeoisie, supporting liberal values, both in politics and in the economy.

The Revolution, based on the ideas defended by classical liberalism, was believed as a new beginning, in which the absolute power of the king would be transferred to the absolute power of the people. It was time to deny a past of old ideas of tradition, of the hierarchy of monarchs, aristocrats and the Catholic Church and to make the future based on new principles of freedom, equality and fraternity. The famous Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen of 1789 is the most tacit demonstration of bourgeois revolutionary thinking, because:

This document is a manifesto against the hierarchical society of noble privileges, but not a manifesto in favor of a democratic and egalitarian society. "Men are born and live free and equal before the laws", said his first article; but it also foresees the existence of social distinctions, even if "only on the ground of common utility". Private property was a natural, sacred, inalienable, and inviolable right. Men were equal before the law and professions were equally open to talent; but if the race began without handicaps, it was equally understood as a *fait accompli* that runners would not end up together. The statement stated (as opposed to the noble hierarchy or absolutism) that "all citizens have the right to collaborate in the drafting of laws"; but "personally through their representatives". And the representative assembly that she envisioned as the fundamental governing body was not necessarily a democratically elected assembly, nor was the regime implicit in it intended to eliminate kings. A constitutional monarchy based on a land-owning oligarchy was more suited to most bourgeois liberals than the democratic republic which might have seemed a more logical expression of their theoretical aspirations, although some also advocated this cause. But overall, the classic liberal bourgeois of 1789 (and the liberal of 1789-1848) was not a democrat but rather a devotee of constitutionalism, a secular state with civil liberties and guarantees for the private enterprise and a government of taxpayers and owners. (HOBBSAWN, 1981, p. 77).

Therefore, this was the document that expressed the desires of a certain social group, although it was disguised itself as the general will of the newly created French nation. The objectives of the moderate bourgeoisie<sup>2</sup> were to rationalize and transform France. But even among the bourgeoisie there was a distinction, and the Jacobins who stood out for their revolutionary impetus that mobilized the people and made the dream of social justice seem more palpable, gained notoriety among the mass of Frenchmen. Although this group became known for the guillotine-related terror, and in fact, from the beginning, the protagonists of the Revolution defended the primacy of violence as a momentary instrument of consolidation of freedom (BOTO, 1996, p. 75). The ideals (Abolition of slavery in the French colonies; Education for all; End of all the privileges of the clergy and nobility in France; Aid to the needy; etc.) defended by this group were in tune, much more than those of the first, with the people's desire.

### **The combatant Jacotot**

Our character, Jacotot, was involved in the revolutionary climate. He was even elected deputy in the House of Representatives by the Côte d'Or department, although in his absence, in 1815, during the government of the Hundred Days. Period of the Revolution that marks the return of Napoleon Bonaparte to power after his escape from exile on the island of Elba. Jacotot was part of a small group that openly supported the then constitutional Emperor. (TONIATTI, 2015, p. 49).

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<sup>2</sup> The moderate bourgeoisie was represented by the Girondins and wanted to avoid the installation of the republic, which would guarantee greater participation of urban and rural workers in politics.

Shortly thereafter, the Bourbon monarchy was restored, albeit under a new regency, as a constitutional monarchy other than the Old Absolutist Regime, having limits on its power. Jacotot, however, "[...] after expressing his hostility to the Bourbons he had to go into exile in Belgium until, after the events of 1830<sup>3</sup>, he returned to France and began to spread his great discovery of 1818: Universal Teaching" (CASTILLO, 2013, p. 68)<sup>4</sup>.

## The exile

As Sirinelli (2003, p. 252) points out, attraction and hostility play an equally, sometimes decisive role in the trajectory of intellectuals. It was precisely the hostility expressed by Jacotot that distanced him from the political climate of his country and pushed him into an adverse reality in an unknown environment, thus causing a rupture in his intellectual trajectory.

At the time he was exiled in the distant Netherlands, Jacotot obtained from the king the post of teacher in part-time, and among the first students who came to him to learn, none knew French, the master, in turn, ignored Dutch, what made Jacotot put a book in the hands of the students, *Telemaco de Fénelon*, in bilingual edition (French/Dutch). He asked them, with the help of an interpreter, to learn French, supported by translation. When the students had read up to half of the book first, Jacotot asked them to repeat over and over again what they had learned, and the rest to design to read in order to narrate as they could (RANCIÈRE, 2013, p. 18). It was an impromptu situation, but Jacotot was stunned by the result of that simple action:

I had been an explainer all my life, therefore, I believe like all my colleagues that explanations, and especially my explanations, were necessary: what was my surprise when I saw that you could do without them! The feat was before my eyes, I couldn't doubt it. I took my side and decided not to explain anything to ensure how far the student could go in this way, without explanation. It happened that the students located the spelling and followed the rules of grammar as the twenty-four books became familiar to them through repetition. However, a result that surprised me beyond all expression it was to see some small foreigners writing like the French writers, and therefore, better than me and my fellow explainers. (JACOTOT, 2008, p. 290)<sup>5</sup>.

Such was the revelation of this experience, that Jacotot could not ignore it, then began to defend the method he had discovered by chance. The idea that the explanations, in which education is sustained are unnecessary, became so clear to the spirit of that teacher, that he went on to deny them altogether. And to see how far that opinion could go, he started teaching what he didn't know. He taught painting and piano, two subjects in which he was incompetent, he also taught law students to plead in Dutch, while he himself continued to ignore that language (RANCIÈRE, 2013, pp. 33-34). And these experiences sufficed Jacotot to establish the

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<sup>3</sup> The movement of the 1830 Liberal Revolutions that began in France, with the uprising that became known as the Three Glorious Days Revolution, spread throughout Europe: Belgium liberated itself from the Netherlands and there were (failed) attempts at the unification Germany and Italy and the liberation of Poland. The movement also had subsequent repercussions in Portugal and Spain. In Brazil, on April 7, 1831, a strong movement of popular opposition led Emperor Dom Pedro I to abdication. In 1829, Greece had already freed itself from Turkish domination.

<sup>4</sup> My translation.

<sup>5</sup> My translation.

principles of his method: 1) All men have equal intelligence; 2) Every man has received from God the faculty of being able to instruct himself; 3) We can teach what we do not know; 4) Everything is in everything. In fact, for Jacotot it was not a method, but a path, an opinion, an experience that began precisely by suspecting that "All men have an equal intelligence" (JACOTOT, 2008, p. 26) and making this hypothesis the principle of Universal Teaching.

### **Historical-philosophical aspects of universal teaching**

The pedagogue Jacotot was a participant in a period where experiences and pedagogical reforms were emerging that prepared the field for the institution of the French compulsory public school, the idea of educating the people as a necessary means for any possible emancipation was widely shared in his time, as well as, the necessary intervention of institutions to achieve this objective (CASTILLO, 2013, p. 67). The revolutionary movement of 1789 paid special attention to popular and elementary education, the struggle was also in defense of a free, lay, universal, mandatory, public and state education, principles that were progressively inscribed in revolutionary legislation since the Constitution of 1791, as highlights Hilsdorf:

the Constitution of 1791 approved the free elementary education offered by the state; in April 1792, by Condorcet's project, free elementary schools, lay and equal for both sexes were created, with the explicit objective of "forming their reason"; In July 1793, from a Lepeletier project, presented by Robespierre, the places where it would take place, that is, boarding schools for young revolutionaries, in which boys and girls from five to twelve years old would be educated by a common curriculum, with an emphasis on physical exercises and civic training practices; and, in December 1793, by project of the deputies Bouquier, Barère and Lakanal - this a former student of the Lassalists converted to the Revolution - this education was defined as compulsory and national, based on the teaching of reading, writing, arithmetic, notions of grammar, the practice of measures, the lesson of things, and republican morality, given by teachers hired by the State. (HILSDORF, 2006, p.188-189).

In fact, the Revolution intended to create a new type of man, emancipated, free and equal, it was necessary to liberate the popular consciousness of the marks and customs inherited from a past of oppression. The instruction of the people through school was urgent and necessary, only it would be able to "imprint on the souls of new citizens the record of unprecedented sociability that would recreate customs, habits, values and tradition itself" (BOTO, 1996, p. 99). The school gained from that moment the status of institution, since the people should be instructed not by the family, but by the country and for the nation.

The State, represented by the school institution, becomes, then, the great pedagogue, and the people, the permanent educating. The instruction of an incapable people, guided by experience, becomes the task of the representatives of the sovereign concept of people, into which the first must convert itself. "[...] mean, the direction of the ignorant by those who know, of individuals closed in their particularism by the universal of reason, of a crowd stupid by an

intelligent race [...]”<sup>6</sup> (JÓDAR E GÓMEZ, 2003, p. 247). The very idea of public education takes as a principle the inequality of intelligences.

Even the equality enunciated in the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen of 1789, is nothing more than a prophecy that carries a purpose of political pedagogy when declaring that “in knowing their rights, the people would see sense in loving and defending them” (BOTO, 1996, p. 71). And it is not new that popular emancipation through education is yet to be fulfilled, as well as its sovereignty. This sovereignty that shows itself as an ideal to be realized it will never be palpable, because society imposes its laws and explanatory corporations on it. For this reason, Jacotot rebelled against this view, emancipation, according to him, occurs among individuals, who discover themselves equal, never through institutions; men are equal and sovereign as individuals, but they will never be as citizens:

The people alienate themselves in their chief in exactly the same way as the chief alienates themselves in their people. This reciprocal subjection is the very principle of political fiction as the original alienation of reason in relation to the passion of inequality. The paralogism of the philosophers consists in imagining a people of men. But this is a contradictory expression, an impossible being. There are not but peoples of citizens, of men who have alienated their reason to the unequal fiction. (RANCIÈRE, 2013, p. 129).

Therefore, for Jacotot, a free and equal people would not be achieved with laws and constitutions, because equality between men cannot be decreed by law or by force, not even can it be received passively. It must only be verified by each person who in his constant attention to himself finds his own phrases to make himself understood by his equals (RANCIÈRE, 2013, p. 106). According to Universal Education, neither education nor politics should start from inequality and try to annul it with corrective actions, in order to make equal to unequal (CERLETTI, 2003, p. 305). But on the contrary, they should recognize the equality between the intelligences, which horizontalizes the power relations and raises intellectual protagonism in each one.

During the 19th century, there was a discussion about who should be delegated the education of the people and it was considered whether it would be up to the task of educating themselves without waiting for the government or the clergy. However, with the strengthening of the State, it was incumbent on the State the mission to compensate for the general backwardness of the majority of the population, since the parents were illiterate, which made the idea that they could instruct themselves unthinkable. And the efficiency of the methods was measured by their ability to teach more, to the greatest number of ignorant people. The problem is that all classical teaching is based on the supposedly neutral idea of explanation-transmission, whose matrix maintains that there is a knowledge that the master holds and transmits to the student who, in turn does not hold, nor can come to hold without the explanation of the master:

But the recognition of this distinction between those who know and those who do not, which is inherent in the very existence of any magisterium, not only defines the relationship that each one has with knowledge, but, and this is the most important, demarcates a

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<sup>6</sup> My translation.

series of periods. Indeed, becoming aware of the segmentation that produces the domain of certain knowledge causes each one to internalize the place he occupies and see that the possibility of ascending is linked to subordination - at first, intellectual - to an explainer (CERLETTI, 2003, p. 301-302)<sup>7</sup>.

It creates the need for social mediators in the name of a technical or operational disability of the majority. Not only the Pedagogues but also economists, technocrats, politicians, etc. (CERLETTI, 2003, p. 304). Thus, society makes the segmentation of bodies and places, what, for Jacotot is to brutalize, because it hierarchizes the intelligence and divides them into lower and higher.

### **The general thought of the time**

Jacotot went on to declare that anyone can be an emancipating master, even an illiterate father can use his son if he is emancipated, and for that, it is enough that he reflects, without mediating explanations, on the moral and intellectual similarity that exists among all men (CASTILLO, 2013, p. 73). This position could not succeed in the imagination of the time, as it questioned the foundations of the educational system that was strengthening at that time. But Jacotot will continue to argue that there are two ways of instructing, one that brutalizes, when an incapacity of the ignorant is confirmed, intending to reduce the distance from not knowing to know; the other that emancipates when a capacity that is ignored or denied that one has is forced, to extract from it all the possibilities that it is capable of (CERLETTI, 2003, p. 306).

Jacotot considered that the Enlightenment idea of extending knowledge to the ignorant population as an emancipatory measure resulted in a circle of impotence, due to the social philosophy that this so noble intent hid (CASTILLO, 2013, p. 73). The idea that the people would need the guardianship of the state to become emancipated would give those who teach what they know power over what they supposedly do not know. Emancipation, thus, in the field of abstraction, becomes something that will never be achieved, because it postpones to infinity.

This artifice system focuses on the worst in the people, takes as its starting point its supposed ignorance and incapacity, with the purpose of achieving an equality that is never realized. He despises in the man of the people his power and keeps him in a captive, humiliating position. Contrary to this system, Jacotot defends that every man can conceive of his human dignity by measuring his intellectual capacity and deciding what use he will make of it. Therefore, Jacotot proposed:

through the action on the existing relationship game “circulating the electric energy of emancipation” (idem, *ibid.*, p. 180) in the social body, so that the assumption that sustains the instruction process overflows: the inequality of intelligences. Practices and relationships that are not a means to achieve equality, for an end situated elsewhere, but that have real effects in themselves, constitute verification of equality (JÔDAR and GÔMEZ, 2003, p. 249)<sup>8</sup>.

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<sup>7</sup> My translation.

<sup>8</sup> My translation.

The emancipated people would question the brutalizing vision of the world that defends the inequality of intelligences, and it would understand in the same way that all rationality that maintains the social order, in its classifications and stratifications is nothing but a convention. Jacotot realized that the explanations, basis of pedagogy, and that it is the conduction of students by stages of ignorance until knowledge, before being an indispensable vehicle to the magisterium it is a subtle weapon of imposition and domination. If this vertical relationship between master and student is not natural, as pedagogy thought, then the construction of a relationship opposite to this one is also possible. And Jacotot used all his efforts to bring the novelty that glimpsed to the last consequences (CERLETTI, 2003, p. 301).

### **The Jacotot Method**

The Universal Teaching method, technically analyzed, proposed by Jacotot, is divided into three parts: “mnemonic, analytical and synthetic” (CASTILLO, 2013, p. 70), which consist respectively of 1) delivering the student's memory to the text; 2) compel the student to reflect and distinguish for himself, the voices and relationships that unite ideas; 3) make the student compose essays on the different themes with the materials he found in the first two stages. It is essential for the method developed by Jacotot that the intelligence of the master, as well as that of the student, was on the same plane of ignorance regarding the content. Although the method also admits the possibility for the student to learn alone and without the need for a teacher, confronting himself only with the intelligence of the book author to which he dedicates his attention. This is because the pedagogy of emancipation proposed by Jacotot is based on the opinion of equality among the intelligences.

In this sense, Castillo (2013) warns that Universal Teaching should not be confused with so many other pedagogical proposals that circulated in the 19th century, because there is no by its singularity, the possibility that it is an option among so many other methods, it is not a question of learning more or less well or more or less quickly. It is something else, it is the most extreme radicality of thinking and doing education in relation to the pedagogy established in classical education. And to measure the effectiveness of Universal Teaching, one must consider not what it accomplishes, but what to give place to be realized by each man in his intellectual adventure. (JODAR E GÓMEZ, 2003 p. 245).

Universal Teaching departs even from the so-called natural methods that are inspired by the same base as yours, such as pedagogical naturalism, based on Rousseau's theory (CASTILLO, 2013, p. 74). Jacotot's discovery was not about a chain of closed and orderly procedures to be reproduced, it was about believing that human nature is capable of instructing itself. However, the book assumed a fundamental role in Universal Teaching, as it was the easiest way for a family man to emancipate his child. But not only the book, but any object created by the human mind could also be the cause of knowledge for an ignorant, this element would form together with the master and the student the circle of power.

The book, [or a work of art, a score, or any object created by the human mind] for it, is ready and finished. It is a whole that the student has in his hands, which he can look at entirely. There is nothing that the master subtracts from him and nothing that he can subtract from the master's eye. The circle abolishes the cheating. And, first of all, this great cheating, which is incapacity: *I cannot, I do not understand ...* There is nothing to understand. Everything is in the book. Just report - the shape

of each sign, the adventures of each sentence, the lesson of each book. You need to start talking. Don't say you can't. You know how to say I can't. Say it in your place, *Calypso could not* ... And you will have started. You will have started on a path that you already knew and that, from now on, you must follow without leaving it. Don't say: *I cannot say*. Or, you learn to say it in the manner of *Calypso*, or *Telemachus*, Narwhal, or Idomeneia. The other circle has already started, that of the power. You will not cease to find ways to say I cannot and soon, you will be able to say everything (RANCIÈRE, 2013, p. 44-45).

For his belief in the intellectual potency of each man, Jacotot asked for books, amphitheatres, physics laboratories to be opened (CASTILLO, 2013, p. 74), and all the temples of knowledge, which society insists on keeping secret or hinder its access through its norms. The emancipated student does not need masters or educational institutions to guide him in the labyrinth of knowledge that he can travel alone, keeping himself attentive, he knows that everything is in everything, he will not cease to know and to know himself along this path.

Despite all of Jacotot's personal efforts, his method has not escaped the neutralizing adaptations that have spread throughout Europe, and which have distorted the true emancipatory potential of Universal Teaching. Castillo (2013), highlights the adaptation of Miguel Rovira in Spain, who edited in 1835 the first manual in Spanish of the Jacotot method (Ibid., P. 71/72). In it, its author used Telemaco, detailed each step of his version of the method, and reaches the point of specifying the answers that must be given by the students. Thus, like so many other adaptations of the time, Rovira's dirigisme brought about the sterility of the method, not understanding its radicality in relation to the others.

For Jacotot, his method was a very simple discovery: each man experiences situations of emancipation since his birth when learning without explanation. It is enough that each one realizes this fact, and Universal Education will serve to learn the most different disciplines: mathematics, geography, physics, history ... using the same procedure that is, read, reread, learn from memory, report, and verify any text about what you want to learn (Ibid., p. 73). Only two requirements are indispensable for this: first, to know the good news of emancipation, that is, to know oneself to be emancipated and with emancipating power; second, having willpower, which is the power to act according to your own movement (RANCIÈRE, 2013, p. 83).

### **The question of emancipation**

In Jacotot, emancipation begins when the opposition between teaching and learning is questioned, for his contemporaries, it was ideal, which would only come through the superiority of teaching. The emancipating master is the cause of knowledge for the student without transmitting any knowledge to him when he forces him to seek and verify his own search. Unlike the master explainer who holds the knowledge that the student can only absorb from him.

Within the emancipatory logic of Jacotot, student and teacher establish a relationship of wills, when the individual is not yet emancipated it will be the teacher's will that will force him to remain attentive in his search for knowledge. The student's will obeys the teacher's will, but his intelligence is free to act as he wishes. The teacher's intelligence, on the other hand, is outside, it is only his will that guides the student along a path that the master did not follow the route is proper of the student. As CERLETTI (2003, p. 303) points out, the only imperative admitted in Universal Teaching is this: You can!

## Conclusion

We conclude this article by arguing that Joseph Jacotot, more than a teacher, soldier, and revolutionary in 19th century France, he was a man who experienced the veracity of the opinion he proclaimed at each step of his trajectory. He was sensitive and attentive to the point of not neglecting an event that endangered his own professorship. More than that, he dared to announce in every possible direction the realization that he had witnessed at the crucial moment when all the concern of intellectuals at the time was the discovery of more efficient methods to remove people from ignorance, and the building of institutions and laws that could progressively guarantee the rise of all men to an equality stage.

In announcing that the explanation was not necessary and that any improvement in that direction was fallacious, Jacotot proclaimed that it was necessary to abandon everything that had been built up to that point in the name of a free, equal, and fraternal society, it was necessary to change course and establish a new beginning. The direction was wrong because the starting point was wrong, it is not from inequality that one must move forward, but precisely from equality, because it already exists, has always existed, just needs to be verified.

Jacotot announced the common sharing to all humanity, the intellectual power of every human being to venture, trusting each one in his intellectual capacity to be able to guess what his fellow man said or wrote and to experience all the educational, political, and social consequences that this adventure can offer. Certainly, contemporary society did not take Jacotot seriously, it would not give up its masters, institutions, and legislation. However, we delight with the radicalism of Jacotot's thought, more than a method to be adopted among so many others, his discovery presupposes the integral confidence in human potency. Nothing more worthy of the known, but not materialized, slogan of equality, freedom, the fraternity that animated the French Revolution.

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