

The *Ignorant Schoolmaster* and other Stories about the School

Lílian de Aragão Bastos do Valle¹

¹Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro (UERJ), Rio de Janeiro/RJ – Brazil

ABSTRACT – The *Ignorant Schoolmaster* and other Stories about the School. The most striking characteristic of educational policy announced by the new Brazilian government is undoubtedly the claim to make moral formation the axis of the profound changes intended. If, in the practical life this proposal seems to be quite unenforceable, in the realm of discourses it rekindles a polemic that has been solved in the history of the Brazilian public school by the apparent victory of modern cognitivism over a conservatism of religious matrix. In order to escape the limits of this historical antagonism, which would have led from the traditional school to the modern school, the present article proposes the analysis of another passage – that in the work of Jacques Rancière leads from the critique of a well-thinking enlightenment to a conception which has in the aesthetic experience of social reality and its divisions its main foundation.

Keywords: Public School. Cognitivism. Moral Formation. The Ignorant Schoolmaster.

RESUMO – O *Mestre Ignorante* e outras Histórias sobre a Escola. Sem dúvida a mais marcante característica da política educacional que vem sendo anunciada pelo novo governo brasileiro é a pretensão de fazer da formação moral o eixo das profundas mudanças pretendidas. Se, no campo das práticas, essa proposta ainda genérica parece de difícil execução, no terreno dos discursos ela reacende uma polêmica que se resolveu, na história da escola pública brasileira, pela aparente vitória do cognitivismo moderno sobre o conservadorismo de matriz religiosa. Pretendendo escapar aos limites desse antagonismo histórico, que teria levado da escola tradicional à escola moderna, o presente artigo propõe a análise de uma outra passagem – aquela que, na obra de Jacques Rancière, leva da crítica a um iluminismo bem-pensante até uma concepção que tem na experiência propriamente estética da realidade social e suas divisões seu principal fundamento.

Palavras-chave: Escola Pública. Cognitivismo. Formação Moral. O Mestre Ignorante.

In recent years, under the implausible name of *school without party*, a political project championed by an expressive number of members in the Brazilian House of Representatives and Senate, aligning religious ideology to party-political motivations, made weigh upon the public school an original and strictly fanciful accusation: of being responsible for the diffusion of all sorts of nefarious values, aligning it to the *communist Marxist* spectrum, present in the academic training of public teachers, for the most phantasmatic threats inspired by the social struggles in favor of gender liberty, despicably identified to pedophilia, to incest and to anything that horrifies the unwary citizens to which they direct those narratives.

Even without any factual basis or empirical evidence, the religious argument made for a powerful party-political instrument, having proven its efficacy in the recent elections, assuring its apologists victory, therefore resurrecting, suddenly, an old figure of the educative rhetoric, which credits the *moral formation* of individuals as the public education's main task: and this when everything makes us think that the public school has long lost the centrality given it by the Modern period, which addresses the citizen's formation, and due to its monopoly in the dissemination of the socially necessary knowledge. It meant, to some extent and regarding the dominant educational conceptions of the Modern period, cognitivism's victory over conservatism, the former upheld itself in the formative potency of knowledge against the unbreakable faith in the significance of the religious moral formation of the latter.

In Brazilian public school's history, the liberal Rui Barbosa – declaring war against conservatism – was one of the most tough and influential advocates of the secular school, which he supports with arguments that became classics: the need of a *neutral* education grounded on science, purified of dogmas and obscurantism, able to shape the *free spirits that the Nation needs*. Therefore, against *religious fanaticism*, he considered the use of taxpayer resources to proselytism ends was a way to *damage property*. Moreover, the author proposes the removal of religious teachers:

Experience confirms, in effect, what should at any rate be expected *a priori* – owing, now to the influence, today supreme in Catholicism, of this school, whose winding morals, weaved out of probabilities and mental reserves, was sadly immortalized in Pascal's admirable book – now to the perverse action of these vows, impossible to human nature in its normal conditions, which represent the family as a subordinate state [...] (Barbosa, 1947, p. 323).

That is because, as Rui objects, the deep identity between religion and education, that marks the religious' perspective would prevent them from cultivating the *neutrality* that the public education requires. All in all, it is about safeguarding the *secularity of the school*, the independence of instruction from the catholic *cult* and *romanticism*. In this

respect, the moderate Rui does not believe there are possible concessions:

If, therefore, the Brazilian government, the Brazilian parliament, the Brazilian statesmen, the Brazilian parties are not resolved to confess that public teaching is the domain of the Church, and not of the State, they should renounce, once and for all, the dream of being in agreement with the passions of intolerance. Let it not be assumed that, out of this flaw, we contest exclusively the roman clergy. All religions whose hierarchy has tasted power in the secular sphere, suffer, if not to the same degree, from this common vice. Alongside such genre of aspirations there can be (history shows it) no *modus vivendi*, no possible harmony (Barbosa, 1946, p. 323).

Thus, we could understand the current moment as a kind of traditionalist revenge, which supports itself on the decline of the modern project. Is this what it is truly about?

We will need to go farther in our analysis of the public school's origins to verify that, if history did grant a victory to Rui Barbosa's thesis, it was considerably mitigated, by virtue of Brazilian society's characteristics and the school itself. Apart from the dispute between the modern *civilizational school* and the traditionalist *regenerative school* (Valle, 1996), from the faith in the emancipatory power of knowledge against the belief in the importance to preserve traditional values, was established a quite welcome pact between the two sides in the Modern period – which, in some way, was represented by the social hygiene movement in the beginning of the last century. In fact, it is possible that cognitivism may have ensured, to some degree, the survival of an educational project able to make itself the moral backbone of society through the general education.

The reason why lies in the distinct characteristics that determined the creation of a specialized institution, in the Modern period, destined to offer a common formation to all the citizens and, therefore, build a national unity: how to proceed to not only the uniformization of the educational times and spaces, let alone the formative practices? How to reduce all the sorts of possible human relations in a necessary and viable pattern of educational practice? The long waited unity found its viability condition in the curricular form: the regular communication of content, disposed in a reasonable progression of lessons, became the main axis around which the public education established itself. Thus, the cognitivism's victory revealed itself as a true *condition per quam* the establishment of the public common education not only on the country, but everywhere the model has set itself. So it is no surprise that in all this time the public school has been in charge of the *instruction* of the individuals, even if it was expected that it carried out the ethical formation of the instructed individuals.

However, in face of the public school's crisis, how can we consider the groundless critics that it is target today? The first interpretation

would take us to consider that we are in front of a great rhetoric without practical effects. Truly, this is one way to understand the issue, since the proposition of a moral education have always, regarding to the public school, stumbled upon the impossibility of the unification of procedures e practices that rely on relations that are strictly personal.

But it is required to consider that the space lost by the public school is, today, being claimed by the neo-*envangelical* initiative – more specifically, by the *neoevangelic* proselytism – which, in contrast to the educational institution, has been expanding its influential place in the society. It is improbable that this ultraconservative movement results in the *moral revolution* that some branches of the Brazilian new government have been preaching, at least not immediately. But, henceforth, we have to be afraid that the mood of instability, violence and radicalism, which until now presented itself as an external threat, derived from the narcotraffic's irrepressible expansion, definitely invades the school's domain under the new form of a generalized struggle for the ideologic control over the minds and bodies of the future citizens, distracting us from what should be our task in the formation of humans, free from the grasp of fear and obscurantism. And the mere enunciation of this formulation compels us to consider if we weren't, truly, back to a past which we judge forever revolved. But a more careful exam of the actual reality is enough to dissolve this first impression, not only because of the radicalism of those who dare to detract the school and the teaching class has no parallel in the pages of the Brazilian educational conservatism, but equally because - even though the conservatist discourse seems to believe in the contrary – the Brazilian society is not the same from the past century and faces itself with challenges and demands which did not existed at that time.

This account must be worthy too in defense of the democratic education: we cannot go back to the past. And if the heritage of achievements, proposals and projects cannot be abandoned, its defense cannot justify the stubborn reiteration of the mistakes and limits to which it gave place. Thus, in what grounds, nowadays, can we situate the fight for new perspectives to the human formation? Which is the role that we think the public school will assume today?

It is possible that one of the most fruitful hints to the reflexion about the public school's reinvention is offered to us by Jacques Rancière's path, a model in relation to the growing disinvestment from part of the contemporary intellectuals about more traditional forms of political fights and the growing concern with aesthetics, understood in the term most profound and radical sense.

It has been almost two decades since the publication of the *Ignorant Schoolmaster's* Brazilian translation (Rancière, 2002), and more than three of them since the work was published in France (Rancière, 1987), but, to the observer remains the impression that, over the course of time, Jacques Rancière's book has been taken for what it is. Contrary to what it might say and its uses today, this is certainly *not* a book about

an *educational* method, not even a philosophical proposal aiming at a new *project* of an educational action. This should not, of course, imply that one cannot, from their reading, invent new methods and propose new education projects: but we must fear the disastrous consequences of claiming to take the book as a primer on education, as an anarchist manifesto of good thinking, as a manifest that guarantees the believer his place in the righteous' paradise¹.

It is not new that the philosophical works worthy of that name are poorly accommodated to the decontextualized quotation of one or the other of his passages: but, especially in the case of the *Schoolmaster*, this way of doing so proves to be mistaken, for the statements and theses defended therein are organized in a coherent fabric of intentions and points of view that Rancière maintained at the time of his writing. And in order to dispel some misunderstandings in this regard, one should perhaps begin by recalling what the central argument of this philosophical novel is, and also taking up the contextualizations which the author deemed necessary to establish in the body of the original text, as well as the text which we publish by way of preface to the Brazilian edition.

As it turns out from the beginning, the hero of this philosophical novel, Joseph Jacotot, was a French revolutionary who, with the Restoration of the French Monarchy in 1830, is forced to seek refuge in the Netherlands – Nederland, a country known to us as Holland. The *ignorant schoolmaster* is therefore coming from a profoundly painful experience, from the failure of the long fight his country had fought against injustices and privileges that had consumed so many years of its existence; and it carried with it the bitter awareness that in the history of peoples, as well as in individual practices, the Aristotelian maxim holds that all progress is fragile, painfully conquered, while ever-receding setback is swift and lasting.

Therefore, in bringing Jacotot to the French scene of the 1980s – just as a socialist, François Mitterand, came to power for the first time in the history of the French Republic – Rancière tells us about the failure of a collective project. The resistances provoked by the event were far from clouding the formidable joy of a population that filled the streets in the hope of a transformation that could not take place another May, of the year 1968: the times were definitely of hope and trust in the political project.

But, as notices Rancière, the victory of the socialists “[...] had placed on the agenda the propositions of progressive sociology, particularly embodied by Pierre Bourdieu’s work” (Rancière, 2002, p. 12). For the author, it meant to denounce the fallacy that contained the idea that the reduction of inequalities would depend on an adaptation of the school culture to the reality of the children from the deprived classes, as it seemed to be extracted from the positions of the sociologist. In Rancière’s eyes there was a false clash between those who, on the pretext of making school programs more accessible, proposed the elimination of

what was called the *part of the great legitimate culture*, and those who opposed that strategy in the name of the modern belief in the power of equality and the civilizing aspect that only universal knowledge had. False clash, since, on the basis of both proposals to reduce inequalities, according to Rancière, lay the same reaffirmation of the insurmountable inequality between those who hold knowledge and those who ignore it.

Therefore, between the republican ideology – that is, the Enlightenment's faith in the emancipatory power of knowledge which, by proposing *the universal distribution of knowledge*, gave rise to the public school itself – and, on the other hand, *the modernist pedagogies of knowledge adapted to the state of society*, so popular in those 1980s – Rancière erected a character who, from the bottom of his dismay at the failure of the French Revolution, dared to question the constitutive hierarchies of the knowledge that was supposedly intended to eradicate them.

Against the profession of Enlightened faith, Rancière told by Jacotot that knowledge is not, by itself, emancipating and that, on the contrary, it served as a pretext for inequality: moreover, nothing that Rousseau did not brandish against the encyclopedic enthusiasm of his contemporaries (Rousseau, 1755). However, also conversely to the logic of pedagogical progressivism, Rancière insists that:

[...] Jacotot's proposal is not a program of appreciation of popular culture as much as it is not the equality of knowledge that he announces. Moreover, by dissolving the nexus that, in the name of simple pragmatism, the defense of a class consciousness, or a specific cultural identity, previously built between social origin and vocation to know, he proposes education as an always personal adventure toward the discovery of their own power of self-determination (Valle, 2003, p. 262).

Perhaps here it is appropriate to, once again, resort to the contextualization of the work, under penalty that if one escapes the temptation to take it as the presentation of a method, one may regard it as an accusation against the school and the educational institutions. Not that the opposite way should be taken: surely Rancière does not intend to encourage any defense of the republican school which was constituted; moreover, his hero even stands against his most fundamental principle, which is the right to education and its corollaries – the compulsory teaching and responsibility of the state:

– What does it take [asks the Minister of Public Instruction of Jacques Laffitte's office during the period designated as Restoration] to organize the instruction that the government owes the people and that it intends to provide according to the best methods?

– *Nothing*, said the Founder, the government owes no instruction to the people, for the simple reason that it does not owe people what they can achieve for themselves. Now instruction is like freedom: it is not granted, it is conquered (Rancière, 2002, p. 112).

But what Jacques Rancière envisions is neither the radical extinction of the institution of the public school: what he seeks is, far and far, the profoundly unequal society in which he lives – but to understand it, one must, as has been said, return to the context in which your critique is established.

Thus was named the democratic project which, born on Enlightenment soil in France, made the public instruction its favorite instrument. Perhaps it is appropriate to insist on the meaning that, from then on, the public school came to have in the French tradition: it was then made no less than the pillar of the Republic and, therefore, its craftsmen, the teachers, were called *Hussars* – members of a devoted and invincible regiment that, in the name of that Republic, wage the hand-to-hand with the enemy in the farthest frontiers of ignorance and vice. Or, as Rancière would say, at a conference held in Rio de Janeiro, when the Brazilian edition of the *Schoolmaster* was published:

Society represented itself as a vast school that has its savages to civilize and its struggling students to recover. Under these conditions, the school institution was increasingly tasked with the phantasmagorical task of bridging the gap between proclaimed equality of conditions and existing inequality, increasingly called upon to reduce inequalities that were regarded as residual (Rancière, 2007, online).

To the Enlightenment belief in the equalizing power of public instruction carried out by the state, Rancière opposes the experience of an isolated individual, an expatriate, obliged to *vis-à-vis* with ignorance; one who has learned in hopelessness to downgrade the collective projects and, therefore, could challenge the principle of inequality that quietly inhabited the most beautiful dreams of republican equality.

It was necessary to contest the Enlightenment faith which, taking as its starting point the gap that separated the enlightened from the common people, inspired permanent practices of brutalization and submission; as Pierre Bourdieu's followers did, so to further insist that the problem laid in the inability of the people to recognize the enlightenment, imagining that the solution would then be to adapt them to the ignorant – in a word, to insist on the idea that social equality could be extracted from the public school, was nothing more than to maintain the illusions that always nourished inequalities.

Therefore, in the words of Rancière himself, Jacotot's lesson is radically a *pessimistic* one – doubly pessimistic, it would be the case to add: for it establishes the nullity of the modern political project, which had its basic institution in the public school. But it also holds that not even the egalitarian axiom proposed by the ignorant schoolmaster has any effect on the social order.

Even if equality ultimately established inequality, it could not but actualize itself individually, in the intellectual emancipation which should give back to each one the

equality which the social order had refused, and by its very nature would always deny (Rancière, 1987, p. 13).

Indeed, at the end of the novel, and by the duty of consistency of this melancholic philosopher, it is found that Jacotot's enterprise was destined to fail. This is how one should read these mysterious words by which Rancière defines equality as *fundamental and absent [...] current and untimely*: it resists the institution, it depends on individuals and groups, it always moves away from constituted politics².

Hard words, which one would like to be ready to refuse, but which undoubtedly reflect a very close experience: who would dare to deny that equality is not a reality between us, not even from the formal point of view of laws and rights? For this very reason, it has the epithet of *untimely*, which also serves quite well to qualify, as Paulo Silveira points out, the movement of school occupation in São Paulo in 2015. In his analysis, the author compares this moment to another, of 1968's France: the two contexts marked by the revolutionary character, since egalitarian, but equally elusive to these movements that tried to resist as much as they could to the co-optation of the instituted political forms – perhaps for this very reason, for not finding no form of institution other than its complete denial, they eventually became extinct³.

How to understand the words of Rancière? Assuming that his criticism is directed especially at the public school, by coherence and in accord with the harsh rule of literalness, we should abandon our positions and live by a skepticism that proclaim that no institutional effort, no collective project makes sense, thus being obliged to the alternative between consciously living a farce, or giving up instead of making sense of our common existence. But considering that Rancière's pessimism is aimed at politics as a whole, and more particularly at the pretense and arrogance of past and still in force political projects, we would then have two paths.

First, to try to understand the author's thought, as a duty of honesty and also by curiosity about the lessons to be learned from it, and then to seek the thread of our own convictions, so that this adventure takes place as coherence, at least, with the postulate of emancipation as a task for the teacher.

To understand the author's thought, one must go back to the point where the observation about the centrality granted to education in the modern democratic project was left. It is important to consider that Rancière speaks in this context as a Frenchman for whom the public school is a long-established reality, and no longer the revolutionary project that his forefathers once conceived. In other words, Rancière's public school is the one that materialized with the victory of the liberal tendency in Modernity, and particularly in French society: not the school of civic formation, shaped on the heroic image of the proposed revolution, for example, by a Gabriel Bouquier (1793)⁴ – following the Rousseauian proposal, a school that understood the common life of civic participation, of claims and parties as the true school of democ-

racy – but one that arose from the demands that liberalism, more than any other trend, knew well to anticipate the perfect installation of the capitalist organization of society.

Therefore, we are talking about a school that reduced the civic formation ideals, inherent to democratic participation, of its citizens, to the project of *instruction of the intelligences*; which transformed the struggle against the unequal forces of tradition – monarchy, religion, family – into a governmental monopoly on the education of individuals. It is, in other words, within the cognitivism’s framework that prevailed in the Modern period – Rancière’s critique develops from this tendency which in fact thought humans as *intelligences*, disregarding the dimensions of sensibility and affect.

The novel always talks about *instruction*, not formation; equality and inequality are thought of in terms of *intelligences*; beyond them, there are only *will* which are admitted to be different. *Rancière’s text explains to us that intelligence and will are two faculties that are at stake in the act of learning*, concluding: if masters are necessary, it is not because of the inequality of intelligences, but of will. In this context, emancipation consists in the “[...] act of an intelligence that obeys nothing but itself, even if the will obeys another will” (Rancière, 2002, p. 32).

And then this last sentence finally reveals quite clearly the limits of Rancière’s analysis of *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*, which concerns the impossibility of thinking beyond the radical cognitivism that marked Jacotot’s time and experience.

Moreover, *The Ignorant Schoolmaster* speaks of an experience carried more than two centuries ago in a country very different from ours, and which was aimed at a young adult population of the Dutch elite: how could Rancière, in his right mind, propose it as a model for our days? as a model for the present day? How then could one, in good conscience, take it as a model for the present reality, Brazilian or not?

So it seems wiser, though much more laborious, to seek in the text its undeniably intention to denounce the inequalities that are engendered by the movement that intends to eradicate them: and to receive its critique as eminently destined for politics, as it has been built since the Modern period, as well as all the inequality it results. For if the author condemns *the practice of pedagogues based on the opposition of science and ignorance*, it is because, and precisely because, the modern society of which he speaks was a *pedagogized society* in which material domination unfolded into a spiritual, cultural and scientific domination: “The virtue of the ignorant master is to know that a wise man is not a master, a master is not a citizen, a citizen is not a wise person” (Rancière, 2007, online). Briefly, a society permanently divided between the wise and the ignorant, between the active and the passive, between its full members and the excluded. And it already seems possible now, without any hesitation, to recognize the present.

The opposition between ‘brutalization’ and ‘emancipation’ is not an opposition between methods of instruction.

It is not the opposition between traditional or authoritarian methods and new or active methods: brutalization can, and indeed does, go through all sorts of active and modern forms. The opposition is properly philosophical. It concerns the idea of intelligence that presides over the very conception of learning. The axiom of equality of intelligences asserts no specific virtue of the ignorant, no science of the humble, or intelligence of the masses. It simply states that there is not only one kind of intelligence at work in all intellectual learning. It is always a matter of referring what is ignored to what is known, of observing and comparing, of saying and verifying. The student is always someone who seeks. And the master is, first and foremost, a man who speaks to another, who tells stories and converts the authority of knowledge to the poetic condition of every transmission of words. The philosophical opposition thus understood is at the same time a political opposition. It is not political because it would denounce higher knowledge in the name of inferior intelligence. It is so in a much more radical sense, because it concerns the very conception of the relationship between equality and inequality (Rancière, 2007, online).

And this is, after all, the center of Rancière's thought, the major concern of his work: inequality, as it manifests itself in today's societies. We will rediscover it on *The Nights of Labor* (1988)⁵, the *Disagreement* (1996)⁶, *The Distribution of the Sensible* (2005)⁷. And along the path taken by the author, it can be seen that the field of public instruction, which had concentrated the efforts and attention of nineteenth-century politics, as well as the field of social movements that formed in its margins, is now being abandoned in favor of aesthetics, which, in his words, "[...] today is where we follow-up the battle which, yesterday, had as its object the promises of emancipation, the illusions and delusions of history" (Rancière, 2000, p. 8).

Rancière's shift from the critique of social institutions to the analysis of what Foucault would call forms of subjectivity in our societies, rather than targeting the regime of the arts in and of itself. In so doing, it can be said that Rancière makes a huge contribution to the educational theory and practice thought, which can no longer be mistaken with the presentation of spectacular methodological proposals and which does not the result from the sour refusal of common work, but in his insistence on remembering inequality – the inequality that, among us, masters, also feeds on our intellectual arrogance, our existential inconsistency, our mental laziness, the ease with which words, forever freed from intentions and gestures, are exchanged between us as kind of nods to the project we should have of ourselves.

In his most recent works, Rancière proposes to look at the history of societies as a sharing between two groups, whether we call them owners or workers, wise or ignorant, rational or irrational, civilized or barbarian, masters or slaves, nobles or commoners.

Cornelius Castoriadis said that the institution of democracy began with the definition of what, in a society, had to be absolutely attributed to everyone, to be common to all, not to disappear: as language, as the meaning of this common identity – what he calls, *participable*; and what, for the sake of the same society, should be the object of a private attribution – such as techniques, some knowledge – the *shareable*:

Sharing is to give excluding: the sharing is privative/exclusive distribution/attribution. It refers to that whose attribution to one excludes (by the nature of things or by law) the attribution to another. [...] But, certainly, there are social things that are insofar as they are participable and not shareable: language, customs, etc. The ‘appropriation’ of language by an individual not only does not exclude but implies its ‘appropriation’ by other individuals in indefinite number. Likewise: the individual’s ‘acquisition’ of virtue does not make it more difficult but make it easier for others to ‘acquire’. The participable is what cannot be shared. The shareable is what can be shared and so the question arises as to whether it *should be* shared. Thus, for example, land (and more generally the means of production) is physically shareable, but this does not imply that it must necessarily be *shared*... [...] Therefore, there is [in each society] a *first sharing* of what is one’s attribution that, by nature or by law, excludes the attribution to another [as well as that which should be put in common] (Castoriadis, 1990, p. 294-295).

It is about this essential sharing that Rancière speaks, and that deals substantially with culture, *ethos*, the environment of values, concepts, representations, mental schemes, sensibilities, in short, ways of being, affecting and allowing oneself to be affected, that defines humans and their societies – for it is about them that it is ultimately important to think

I call sharing of the sensible the system of sensible evidence that at the same time reveals the existence of a shared common and exclusive parts. This division of parts and places is based on a division of spaces, times, and forms of activity that determines the way in which the common lends itself to participation and by which one has [or not] access to this sharing (Castoriadis, 1990, p. 12).

This reveals the importance and radicality of Rancière’s thought for the present, forcing us to be aware of this hidden and everlasting rule that defines, in every society as if it were pure nature, who is visible and invisible in common space, who must be endowed with public word and who should be silenced; who is called to lead and who is to be subordinate, who has a thousand talents and who have none.

Foremost, Rancière’s text compels one to think of the attachment and importance given to those divisions, while sustaining the best left-wing egalitarian discourse. And then, there is no way of not agreeing

that it has to be put back into play what has long been excluded: the body, as the foundation of the aesthetic dimension, that is, of sensitivity, as an affirmation of a human reality that refuses to be contained in pure cognition, which overflows as ways of being, feeling, affecting, and allowing oneself to be affected, to desire, to dream, to meet, to accept loss.

So the up-to-dateness of *The Ignorant Schoolmaster* introduces a twofold question: first, whether, by embracing Jacotot/Rancièrè's pessimism, we will refuse common work and instituted politics, insisting that equality, "[...] fundamental and absent, current and untimely, is always dependent on the initiative of individuals and groups" (Rancièrè, 2007, online); or if, following a suggestion by Rancièrè (2007, online) and "[...] against the ordinary course of things", we take the risk of "inventing new forms, individual or collective, of updating equality"?

In this sense, the second question can only be related to our own practice. What place will we give to the illusions that make inequalities between us? How hard and devoted will we look for its roots to best root them out? With what humility and persistence will we again try to surprise in us the seeds of selfishness, vanity, and bad sensitivity that prevent us from denouncing injustices? How much time and ingenuity will we finally give to building a space that, to be democratic, must necessarily consist of intention, affection and appreciation of common existence?

Perhaps this is the master's great lesson: to challenge the prestige and strength of pessimism that comes from the past, as well as all the hopelessness that the present moment and reason eventually impose on the democratic project. Situated in a commitment to what is worth living, in itself and the in the other, it is possible that the teacher today is neither ignorant nor wise after all, but simply one who insists on expecting himself yet, and on the other the challenge of equality.

Translated by Danilo Bantim Frambach

Received on February 04, 2019

Approved on March 31, 2019

Notes

- 1 Shortly after this article was written, from a conference held on December 26, 2018 at the Federal University of Goiania, Jacques Rancièrè gave an interview to Radio France Culture in which he insisted that his intention was never to write a *book of pedagogy*, a *book about teaching* (Rancièrè, 2018).
- 2 "Wouldn't the New School movement be the denial of the Enlightenment postulate of demiurgic knowledge – in favor, exactly, of the emphasis on personal exploration and discovery? There is no doubt that the New School has influenced more than a generation of teachers, introducing the victorious but brief career of learning to learn about traditional teaching. However, no matter how tempting it is to see in an exacerbated individualism the common ground between the two positions and to confuse the model student of active methods

with the modeling activity of Jacotot students, it is impossible to deny that such an approach would reduce the core of proposed to a matter of method, blurring the illuminist background in which pedagogical experimentalism flourished. The replacement of the traditional pedagogy of the neutral transmission of knowledge with the renewed pedagogy of exploration of knowledge leaves entirely intact the myth of modern science, its universal reasonableness and, above all, the legitimacy of the hierarchies it establishes, for which it only provides a new improved version, within the same pedagogical society in which the 'best in class' become the power specialists" (Valle, 2003, p. 261).

- 3 The reference is here to the lecture given by Paulo Henrique Fernandes Silveira (2018) *Quanto tempo poderia durar uma tal comunidade? Quanto tempo poderiam durar as ocupações?* May 68 lasted just over a month, the same as that of the São Paulo secondary movement. Rancière suggests another way of measuring this time. Precisely because it infiltrates the breaches of the established order, it somehow remains a being-to-come (Rancière, 2014, p. 72). Answering the same question, Deleuze states: "May 68 is the intrusion of becoming. They wanted to attribute this fact to the realm of the imaginary. It is nothing imaginary, it is a puff of reality in its purest state. Suddenly, the reality comes. And people didn't understand and they asked, 'What's this?' Finally, real people. The people in your reality. It was prodigious! What were the people in your reality? It was becoming. [...] It was a revolutionary becoming, with no future of revolution" (Deleuze, 2005 apud Silveira, 2018, p. 66).
- 4 "Why should we go and get away from us what we already have under our eyes? Citizens, the most beautiful schools, the most useful, where youth can receive a truly republican education, are undoubtedly the public sessions of departments, districts, municipalities, courts and, above all, popular associations. .]. Everything will be presented to them as a means of instruction... it must be clearly seen that the Revolution organized, as it were, public education itself and distributed inexhaustible sources of instruction everywhere. Do not replace, therefore, this simple and sublime organization as the people who created it with a fictitious organization based on academic status, which should no longer infect a regenerated nation. Let us preserve preciously what the people and the Revolution did; We will be content to add what little remains to complete the public instruction. This complement should be as simple as the work created by the genius of the Revolution [...]", so Gabriel Bouquier (1793, tome XXIX, p. 436) presented his project which would become the first law on the School in December 19, 1793. This law will be amended on November 17, 1794, by the Lakanal Reform Decree, which, in turn, will be replaced by the Daunou Law of October 25, 1795. Cf. Valle (1997, p. 95).
- 5 Original in French: *La nuit des prolétaires* (Rancière, 1981).
- 6 Original in French: *La Méésentente* (Rancière, 1995).
- 7 Original in French: *Le partage du sensible* (Rancière, 2000).

References

- BARBOSA, Ruy. **Obras Completas**: (volume X, tomo I ao IV): reforma do ensino primário e várias instituições complementares da instrução pública. Rio de Janeiro: Ministério da Educação e Saúde, 1947.
- BOUQUIER, Gabriel. **Rapport et Projet de Décret (du 21 frimaire an II) formant un Plan Général d'Instruction Publique**. Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1793.

Disponível em: <<https://catalogue.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cb36352785c>>. Acesso em: 10 dez. 2018.

CASTORIADIS, Cornelius. Valor, Igualdade, Justiça, Política: de Marx a Aristóteles e de Aristóteles ate nós. In: CASTORIADIS, Cornelius. **Encruzilhadas do Labirinto**. Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra, 1990. P. 264-335.

RANCIÈRE, Jacques. **Le Maître Ignorant**. Paris: Fayard, 1987.

RANCIÈRE, Jacques. **La nuit des prolétaires**: archives du rêve ouvrier. Paris: Fayard, 1981.

RANCIÈRE, Jacques. **A Noite dos Proletários**. Tradução: Luis Leitão. São Paulo: Cia da Letras, 1988.

RANCIÈRE, Jacques. **La Méésentente**. Paris: Galilée, 1995

RANCIÈRE, Jacques. **O Desentendimento**. São Paulo: Ed. 34, 1996.

RANCIÈRE, Jacques. **Le Partage du Sensible**: esthétique et politique. Paris: La Fabrique, 2000.

RANCIÈRE, Jacques. **O Mestre Ignorante**. Belo Horizonte: Autêntica, 2002.

RANCIÈRE, Jacques. **A Partilha do Sensível**. São Paulo: Ed. 34, 2005.

RANCIÈRE, Jacques. **Sur le 'Maître ignorant'**. Rio de Janeiro: UERJ, 2007. Disponível em: <<http://www.multitudes.net/sur-le-maitre-ignorant/>>. Acesso em: 10 dez. 2018.

RANCIÈRE, Jacques. **Nas Margens do Político**. Lisboa: KKYM, 2014.

RANCIÈRE, Jacques. Jacques Rancière, Maître Ignorant. **Les Chemins de la Philosophie**, Paris, 07 dez. 2018. Disponível em: <<https://www.franceculture.fr/emissions/les-chemins-de-la-philosophie/profession-philosophe-1442-jacques-ranciere-maitre-ignorant>>. Acesso em: 10 dez. 2018.

ROUSSEAU, Jean-Jacques. **Discours sur l'Origine et les Fondements de l'Inégalité parmi les Hommes**. Amsterdam: Marc Michel Rey, 1755. Disponível em: <<https://philosophie.cegeptr.qc.ca/wp-content/documents/Discours-sur-linégalité-1754.pdf>>. Acesso em: 10 dez. 2018.

SILVEIRA, Paulo Henrique Fernandes. A Gestão Democrática nas Escolas Ocupadas pelo Movimento de Estudantes Secundaristas em 2015. In: CONGRESSO DA SOCIEDADE BRASILEIRA DE FILOSOFIA DA EDUCAÇÃO – SOFIE, 3., 2018, Campinas. **Anais...** Campinas: PUC-Campinas, 19-21 set. 2018. P. 59-67.

VALLE, Lílían do. **As Metáforas da Escola**. (Relatório de pesquisa apresentado ao CNPq). Rio de Janeiro: UERJ, 1996.

VALLE, Lílían do. **Escola Pública, uma Significação Imaginária**. (Relatório de pesquisa apresentado ao CNPq). Rio de Janeiro: UERJ, 1997.

VALLE, Lílían do. **A Ilusão Cognitivista**: raízes antropológicas do discurso educacional contemporâneo. (Relatório de pesquisa apresentado ao CNPq). Rio de Janeiro: UERJ, 2003.

Lílían de Aragão Bastos do Vale is a professor of Philosophy of Education at the Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro (UERJ).

ORCID: <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-8694-9297>

E-mail: lilidovalle@gmail.com

Valle

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License 4.0 International. Available at: <<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0>>.