

BINGHAM, Charles e BIESTA, Gert. **Jacques Rancière: Education, Truth, Emancipation**. London/New York: Continuum, 2010, 176 p.

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In *Jacques Rancière: Education, Truth, Emancipation* (London/New York: Continuum, 2010), *Charles Bingham* (Simon Fraser University, Canada) and *Gert Biesta* (University of Stirling, United Kingdom) delve into a very difficult task: that of communicating Jacques Rancière's educational philosophy without using "Explanation" as a method to inform their readers.

The book opens with a talk that Rancière gave in 2002 at UERJ (Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro/The State University of Rio de Janeiro), titled, in Portuguese, *O valor do mestre – igualdade e alteridade na educação*/The value of the master – equality and alterity in education. In this presentation, the French philosopher revisits his book *The Ignorant Schoolmaster* (1987): he tries to answer what an ignorant schoolmaster is, and what the quality or virtue of ignorance are.

Emphasizing that the "liberalist maieutic" dominant in our neoliberal-globalized world constructs and reproduces social inequality, Rancière proposes that in order to seek true emancipation, the relations of educational authority must be eroded. The teacher should be the one that, assuming himself as an ignorant schoolmaster, "might permit another who is ignorant to know something unknown to both, possible that a common, illiterate person might, for example, permit another illiterate person to learn to read." (BINGHAM & BIESTA, 2010, p.2)

Developing his critique of the school as a model of social inequality, Rancière states that Jacotot, in *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*, drew a radical dissociation between the social logic of consistent reproduction of inequality and the act of emancipating oneself from this logic:

The school is failing at its assigned mission of reducing inequalities, and this is because it ignores the functioning of inequality. It pretends to reduce inequality by distributing knowledge equally, and to all. But it is precisely this appearance of equality that is the driving force behind educational inequality. It remains up to the students and their 'individual talents' to make a difference. (BINGHAM & BIESTA, 2010, p.10)

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How, then, could one effectively make a difference when confronted with the social order of institutions and schooling? Rancière's answer would be: to intervene by dissensus. But dissensus, to the French philosopher, isn't just a mere quarrel: it "is a gap in the very configuration of sensible concepts, a dissociation introduced into the correspondence between ways of being and ways of doing, seeing and speaking." (BINGHAM & BIESTA, 2010, p.15)

At the end of Rancière's conference, we are left with an enigmatic sentence that represents both the philosopher's interventionist character, and the direction Bingham and Biesta intend to draw their essay on:

Affirmation of these simple principles in fact constitutes an unprecedented dissonance, a dissonance one must, in a way, forget in order to continue improving schools, programs and pedagogies, but that one must also, from time to time, listen to again so that the act of teaching does not lose sight of the paradoxes that give it meaning. (BINGHAM & BIESTA, 2010, p.16)

To assume that paradoxes are an element that give meaning to the act of teaching, is to confront the tradition of Western education, based on a strict transmission of truths, like can be seen in Paulo Freire's "banking concept". In a second moment of their essay, the authors develop the idea of a new logic of emancipation in relation to education. What struck me as a reader, though, was the fact that Rancière proposes this movement toward emancipation as a rupture in the order of things, but affirming a concept of subjectification. Although it is to admire the fact that Rancière's subjectification is a radical request to ontologically come into the present and divide the existing order, I like to think about this radical process as a community-oriented political construction organized toward social intervention. Rancière's notion of "subject", or "individual" is a "common self", and not a narcissist.

Rancière cannot be classified into any philosophical postmodern tradition, because his thought is too rich in subversive elements that make it a very difficult task to apprehend and try to extract senses, meanings, empirical ways of "applying" a "Rancièrian pedagogy". Therefore, it should be considered necessary to think his philosophy in the same fashion in which the French philosopher thinks politics, society and language – and to this extent, Bingham and Biesta excel: Rancière is an aesthetician.

On the third chapter, the authors draw a comparison between the figure of the child in Rancière and Paulo Freire, and develop arguments about inclusion, recognition and truth, including ways of thinking the roles of the schoolmaster, the student, the learner starting from Rancière's "logic of the

tort”: assuming that politics is always sporadic and unanticipatable, “it is instigated as a tort and practiced as a demonstration of equality”. (BINGHAM & BIESTA, 2010, p.52)

As pointed out with mastery by the authors, at the core of Rancière’s philosophical education is a demonstration of the arbitrariness of both society and language. Hence, society can’t be explicated, and language (as Nietzsche was suspicious and Foucault developed throughout his philosophical project) doesn’t contain or demonstrate any essential truth. Considering language also as a power structure, Rancière’s strong interventionist characteristic makes more sense as an elegy to subjectification: to the French philosopher, human community is based on domination and exploitation, and that’s why one should accept the arbitrariness of society and language, and engage in a new form of political aesthetic. This is the reason why I affirmed that Rancière is an aesthetician: because the democratic man is a being who speaks, which is also to say a poetic being. (BINGHAM & BIESTA, 2010, p.118)

Various critics have attempted to read Rancière through the lens of strict social politics or political philosophy, but his thought cannot be considered aligned to one or another. I say this because amongst all the good things in their book, this is the biggest of all of Bingham and Biesta’s merits: they see and communicate Jacques Rancière’s educational philosophy as a story, waiting for another story to be told in return.

And they tell their story as a call for the reader to act, to intervene – to seek emancipation from a world built upon a myriad of oppressive social mechanisms, including schooling.