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## JACQUES RANCIÈRE AND A POSSIBLE SCHOOL SCENE

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**Abstract:** The hegemonic pedagogical discourse in Brazilian society classifies the school as an appropriate place for the development of certain skills and competencies that meet the interests and needs of children and adolescents, as well as the social and marketing demands imposed by technological innovations and transformations in the Brazilian labor market. XXI century. As a consequence, the knowledge generated through technoscientific discourse originating from such a context becomes a consumer good, a pedagogical commodity produced massively in the urgency of its voracious and almost immediate use. Transformed into a mere object of consumption, knowledge is disguised as a promise of satisfaction, the acquisition of which, in culture, will be made available in different ways to subjects, placed in the position of consumers. Such instrumentalization would destroy the school experience as *skholè*, time free from productive obligations, a place of equality *par excellence* (RANCIÈRE, 2018). In fact, according to the French philosopher Jacques Rancière, equality is a process that takes place in the present, in action, and cannot emerge as a promise for the future. School is not a preparation, it is a separation, radically different from the logic of consumer relations, means and ends. In fact, there are school experiences that do not respond to this pedagogical model that we call utilitarian. The aim, therefore, in developing the thesis, is to find school experiences in the city of São Paulo that escape the hegemonic pedagogical vision, with the aim of narrating them, inquiring into the reasons that make them possible in order to contribute to the clarification of another possible meaning for education.

**Keywords:** Instrumentalization of education. Jacques Rancière. school experience.

## JACQUES RANCIÈRE AND EQUALITY OF INTELLIGENCE

In his book: *‘‘O Mestre Ignorante – cinco lições sobre a emancipação intelectual’’* (2002), French philosopher Jacques Rancière narrates and analyzes the intellectual adventure of a teacher who, during his classes, verified the equality of intelligences, stating that ignorant people could learn on their own and that teachers could teach what they themselves were ignorant of. In the mid-19th century, Joseph Jacotot taught French to Dutch students who until then knew nothing about this language, while he himself, Jacotot, knew nothing about the language spoken by the class. Acting on the wishes of his students, the teacher taught translation lessons by reading a bilingual book and, at the end of his course, found that the class had learned French. Thus, without the transmission of any knowledge, Jacotot verified that the students had learned by following the orders he gave them.

When narrating Jacotot’s experience, Rancière does not propose to create a theory or even a method to be applied, on the contrary, the author reflects and encourages us to think about the possibility of configuring free educational experiences, not regulated by external impositions or that aim to achieve previously determined objectives. Jacotot’s adventure tells us about a plane of equality established between the speaker and his interlocutors, in which the word circulates equally, without master explainers to speak on behalf of their students, confiscating their voices.

This way, the ignorant master ignores the inequality of intelligence, the alleged “learning gaps”, and does not compose his class with a view to the progress of his students, as this would already presuppose, in itself, an original delay based on the logic of a pedagogized time administered *ad infinitum*. According to this logic, the teacher is responsible for

controlling knowledge whose knowledge is gradually transferred to students in the most appropriate and effective way possible through explanations that always presuppose further complementary explanations. For Rancière/Jacotot, the master will not be able to lead his students to equality by explaining to them (what) they ignore, gradually discovering for his pupils everything that until then was hidden and unintelligible to them, and thus helping them to overcome the inequality through the acquisition of knowledge. Equality and inequality are not, therefore, two phases of the same process:

[...] That topography implies in itself a certain temporality. Lifting the veil that covers things, referring every surface to its depth and bringing every depth to the surface, is something that not only takes time. It is something that also implies another order of time. The veil is lifted progressively, according to the capacity that one can accord to the childish or ignorant spirit at this or that stage. In other words, progress is always the other side of delay. The reduction of distance continues to restore it, thus verifying the axiom of inequality. Ordinary pedagogical reason is based on two fundamental axioms: first, that we must start from inequality and then reduce it; Second, the way to reduce equality is to adapt to it by turning it into an object of knowledge. The success of this knowledge that reduces inequality depends on the knowledge of inequality. [...] Inequality is no longer a fact that must be transformed; in the same way that equality is not a goal to be achieved through the transmission of knowledge. Equality and inequality are no longer two stages. (RANCIÈRE, 2012b, p. 327)

The ignorant master weaves scenes of equality by acting on the will of the students

and forcing them to verify their powers in action. The master forces intelligences to exercise and update their capabilities, to break the cycle of impotence, to not give up and continue trying over and over again. The master's will act on the will of his students and paves the way for emancipation, for tangible presentation as an equal in a community of equals. In an emancipatory education, the master reveals an intelligence to himself, and, from the subjection of the student's will to the teacher's will, the students exercise their intellectual capacity and verify their intelligence.<sup>1</sup>

The emancipating teacher shows students a type of possible relationship with the object of study, initiating them into the desire to see themselves as equals, as people with the same ability to read a book, enjoy a work of art, translate the signs of the common world, with whom they share intellectual adventures. This possible relationship does not nullify the asymmetry of wills between master and students, but it refuses to hierarchize the logos, voice and reason of all interlocutors involved. Emancipation, as a possibility rooted in the present here and now, involves, in this sense, precisely through the achievement of having our voices and speeches heard and reverberated as logos, not as unintelligible noises, as they are considered to be uttered by beings still immersed in the shadows of the cave.

In emancipation, we gained the right to enjoy *loisir*. *Loisir*, a French word commonly translated into Portuguese as *leisure*, acquires, in Rancière's analysis, a different dimension, and can be understood as free time not dedicated to rest between two working days, or to dulling and anesthetizing the brain and

1. In fact, for Jacotot/Rancière, the teacher is responsible for awakening the students' will, demanding their attention so that they do not fall into inertia and complacency. Recognizing the equality of intelligences, the emancipating master exercises his authority over the will of the students; By separating the will from the intelligence, he opens the way to emancipation without the annulment of his authority. While the will of the student must submit to the teacher's will, intelligence must emancipate itself. Regarding the relationship pointed out by Rancière between will and intelligence. RANCIÈRE, 2002, pp. 64-66.

senses through of entertainment, of constant exposure to screens and fragmented content in order to withstand the intense problems that await us at the beginning of the working day, at the end of the weekend or with contact with the reality of horrors that surrounds us.

For the author, equality cannot be understood as a goal to be achieved at the end of the school career. Equality is a principle that is assumed and verified in action, including during school activities. Rancière thus defends what he calls school-form, the place of learning for learning's sake, a place of radical equality, of leisure and leisure, understood as time free from the productive obligations imposed by the demands of the market, including learning itself.

In fact, the Greek *skholè* did not refer to a specific place, a building or a house, built there to prepare for the future exercise of citizenship through the acquisition of socially useful learning necessary for the maintenance of the current productive order. The *skholè* did not aim to fulfill a function previously defined by social demands; it was, rather, the right – of a few – to have access to *loisir*, here understood as an unfinished time, separated from the constraints of work and dedicated to the freedom to enjoy leisure reserved for equals in the polis – the place of equality par excellence.

Hence Rancière's position against the modern public-school project that places as its ultimate objective the achievement of equality on the part of students through the redistribution of knowledge to those who would otherwise not have access to it. The democratic public school is, in itself, in its form, the constitution of an egalitarian space-time separated from the constraints of work, capable of producing effects on its students beyond the control of the ruling classes:

The trivialization of the school form, when the social time of school is identified with

the natural time of children's maturation, masks this fundamental symbolic rupture: leisure, the norm for separating noble and vile lives, has become part of the time of working existence. School is not preparation, it is separation. The criticisms of the "class school" referred this separation rather quickly to the opposition of "formal equality" and "real equality". The school does not lie by promising equality that it would allow to be contradicted by social reality. It is not the "learning" of any condition. It is an occupation, separate from others, governed in particular by a logic heterogeneous to that of the productive order. Its diverse effects, first of all, on other orders have to do with the way it propagates the spells of equality. [...] Whoever experienced school equality is virtually lost to a world of production that is, in principle, one of inequality and the absence of leisure. (RANCIÈRE, 2018, pp. 672-673)

The school-form presented by Rancière thus brings power as a possibility in the present and not as an update in the future. It is radically different from the logic of means and ends and proposes that we inhabit the world without making appropriative uses of it as consumers of available goods. In the school form, the principle that animates the act of teaching is trust in the equal capacity and equality of intelligence of everyone involved, teachers and students. In it, anyone can learn anything without transforming knowledge into an instrument, a weapon with which someone could shoot inequality and destroy it.

Knowledge, be it a book, a class, a play, a work of art, can thus be conceived as a sensitive block, a proposition of a shared world composed of the weaving of egalitarian scenes that occurred in a time of transformation, which can be understood by everyone and is accessible and intelligible to everyone; an arrangement of words and narratives that circulate and affect everyone involved, recombining and forming our syntheses of

the possible, imponderable and non-totalizing sensible. In fact, it is not about establishing exemplary models, absolute truths that hover in an eternal world of ideas, outside of time, whose access would be restricted to just a few, and which would leave no hole for the exercise of another intelligence to be installed. equally capable.

For Rancière, the school that sees itself as capable of reducing inequality in the future ends up reproducing it in the present, creating a temporal representation of inequality related to the idea of progress, that is, inequality due to a temporal lag. Equality, says the author, is a process that takes place in the present, an update that takes place with words that circulate in the sensitive and shared world. Therefore, equality cannot emerge as a promise for the future, it must be affirmed in the act.

In this sense, in *``A noite dos proletários – arquivos do sonho operário``* (2012a), Rancière reverberates the conquest of free time by men and women of the people who decide to be able to choose what to do with the time they must dedicate to rest between the end and the beginning of the working day. We can read in its pages the story of poor emancipated workers from the first half of the French 19th century who were not even given the privilege of choosing “[...] this or that fatigue to live [...]”, but who they rebel and begin to exercise the right that does not belong to them to enjoy *loisir*, to enjoy all the possibilities of experiences typical of people free from worries about material contingencies. The conquest of free time by “[...] these proletarians secretly in love with the useless [...]” occurred through self-taught practices of time subversion – which did not occur in schools or educational institutions –, such as writing articles to periodicals, literary and political debates, enjoyment of works of art, “[...] execution of small works of fantasy

that served no purpose [...]” (RANCIÈRE, 2012a, p. 19).

The workers demand to transgress the symbolic and material barriers that separate those who think from those who work with their hands and decide not to spend time on rest or production, but to spend time in a way that is alien to the monetary value attributed to it in the logic of capital. By having the time that must be allocated to rest and replenishing their bodily energy, conceiving it as a possibility of enjoyment outside of productivity, workers know that they are capable of thinking for themselves and in fact verify their intelligence, they emancipate themselves. and they disidentify with the role of manual worker that they must occupy. In effect, Rancière tells us about the power given to the identifying image that confers the activities, behaviors, thoughts, desires, temporal regimes specific to each person in the sharing of the sensible, reducing workers to the image we have of them, and making it impossible to simply conceive of a worker-writer not passionate about his work in the forge and who conceives dreams and poems outside the leather apron (RANCIÈRE, 2012a, p. 21).

The polyphony of voices of those who risked living other lives, appropriating other identities, dismantling them, reassembling them and experimenting with them, speaking from places other than those of their profession or social origin are heard and are narrated on the pages of *``A noite dos proletários``*. In them, we read about people who speak, think and make themselves heard without the intermediation of spokespersons, master-explainers who would need to show the oppressed how oppressed they are. They are workers who transform the phone into logos, who translate what they see, what they read, what they live and what they dream with their words and share their thoughts with

others equally capable of translating.

## A POSSIBLE SCENE

A school dedicated to the education of young people and adults. The beginning of a school year in a literacy class made up predominantly of women. Wives, mothers, grandmothers and great-grandmothers, housewives and precarious workers, women determined to assert their will and, finally, spend their time according to what they wanted for themselves: attending school, studying and learning letters and languages. numbers – symbols that have always been present in the daily lives of these people, inhabitants of a literate society, which, despite using written records as a privileged and official form of communication, does not guarantee *de facto* access to quality schooling for a considerable part of their population. population. Illiterate, these women were tutored at different times in their lives by relatives or acquaintances who were willing to translate the tangles of letters and numbers into intelligible statements. But, on that day in February 2018, those ladies put themselves to the test and enforced the constitutional right previously denied to attend Basic Education.

The episode that I intend to narrate below refers to school scenes experienced in a CIEJA (Integrated Center for Youth and Adult Education), a municipal public school in the city of São Paulo dedicated exclusively to EJA throughout the day, in which I worked for some good years of my career as a teacher at the Municipal Education Network. These are events that, to a certain extent, imposed themselves and created their formative basis from the contingencies that arose in the school's daily routine and that were experienced by me

and my students in computer classes that took place in the mornings.

I started my work with EJA in 2016, teaching Human Sciences – History and Geography – and Educational IT classes. The classes assigned to me were morning and afternoon classes, and my classes were mostly made up of people with disabilities, teenagers who had graduated from EMEFs and older women. The impressions left on me from the period in which I taught at CIEJA are immense and profound, but the scene that I will initially address and reflect on took place in just a few seconds.

We were starting another year and I was starting computer classes for a Module I class – the equivalent of the first, second and third years of the literacy cycle – made up of around 15 ladies who, as I already suspected, had never attended school when younger. My previous experiences in computer rooms had only been with teenagers, in general, already quite used to dealing with computers and being in educational environments with digital devices, using machines with ease and even surpassing, on several occasions, their knowledge. of teachers in the computational areas to be worked on <sup>2</sup>.

Therefore, my surprise was genuine when, when I opened the door to the computer room, none of the students entered the space. They all stood in the doorway with expressions of astonishment at the sight of a space full of computers. I insisted that they enter, and when they did, they stopped again, now standing in front of the equipment, not daring to approach them or pull out the chair to sit close to them. I was stunned because, for the younger students I was used to, computer classes were always eagerly awaited moments

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2. Nowadays, all municipal elementary, secondary and EJA schools in the city of São Paulo have computer laboratories with Network teachers specialized in the area. The IT initiative as a curricular component began in the capital at the end of the 1980s with the Erundina administration and became effective at the beginning of the 2000s. Unfortunately, we know that this is not the reality in many other cities in the country, which, Rarely, they have difficulties in guaranteeing the supply of drinking water and masonry classrooms. Furthermore, it is worth highlighting that there is still a lot to be done in terms of quality, expansion, modernization and maintenance of the equipment present in municipal schools in São Paulo. (cf. CORRÊA, 2015).

and I don't remember having had to ask a student to enter the room until then. On the contrary, the image I have is of them rushing to get into the laboratory and being able to choose the best computer; automatically open various pages, websites and programs of interest without even saying a word to me. In general, it took several minutes for everyone to calm down and start dedicating themselves to the activities I proposed.

Trying to understand what was going on with my new class, I told the students that the computers were there for them to use, and the students, with expressions ranging from embarrassed, shy and scared, remained hesitant, and spoke in low tones, retorting who didn't know how they must do it. I remember one student, in particular, asking me somewhat incredulously: "Can I really? What if I break it?", to which I could only respond: "If it breaks, we'll fix it, it's your computer." Slowly, they sat down and positioned themselves at their computers, a little uncomfortable at first, but already with latent signs of growing curiosity.

As the classes went on, I came to know that many of these ladies – who until then did not know the name or the use of a keyboard, were unaware of the precise meaning of the word internet, and that they tried to "click" on a point on the screen by lifting the own mouse and touching it to the desired point – they had desktops and notebooks in their homes, on which their grandchildren, children and husbands worked, played, studied, etc. However, they were prohibited from accessing the most expensive appliances in the house, even if they had purchased them themselves. Their relatives claimed that, due to their age and lack of habit, they could not learn more about using computers or other more modern technologies. Evidently, when they entered school, they did not feel authorized to handle the equipment, believing they were inadequate

or too old to begin these studies.

In fact, these ladies had always been told and reaffirmed by words and actions that they were prohibited from the space and time to study areas and themes that were not immediately applicable to the care and maintenance of life, such as domestic chores and conquest of the money necessary for subsistence, tasks specific to women with their social conditions. This exclusion encompasses not only the knowledge of letters and calculations, history and literature, but also digital literacy, contact and the possibility of autonomous use of modern and digital technological devices that surround the residents of a large city like the capital of São Paulo.

However, when they entered a school and sat in front of a computer screen, these ladies became students who could enjoy the right to use computers like all children and young people who attend public elementary schools and average in the city of São Paulo. Amidst the demands of the grueling routine, of uninterrupted working hours, they rebelled and crossed the threshold, convinced themselves that they could study and master the subjects and objects examined by the teachers. During those hours, they did not have to worry about preparing meals for their husbands and children, nor about paying their employers. They took for themselves the time they must dedicate to their daily obligations, including the necessary rest to ensure productivity for the next day, and proved to themselves that they could learn to read and write on paper, on the keyboard and on the screen.

Having been denied as children the right to free time, to the leisure typical of school, to the forty of production that young people can (must be able to) dispose of before being subjected to the productivist demands of the market, these ladies have always found themselves immersed in the stultifying logic

of identification with places of their own that are alien to their desires, places of ignorance and inferiority in a sharing of the sensitive that goes far from computer labs, from the enjoyment of Tchaikowski and Chico Buarque, from the contemplation of the works of Van Gogh and Tarsila do Amaral, Brecht's epic theater and reading classics of Russian literature.

In effect, these women proved themselves capable and actually actualized the equality of intelligence that Jacques Rancière tells us about. They accepted the challenge and sat in front of the computers. Twice a week, throughout the year, we meet to dedicate ourselves to observing, handling and exploring computers and the possibilities available through their use. Initial resistance and denials were overcome and direct contact with our object of study began to fit into their routines so that they began to go to and enter the laboratory without the need for me to pick them up and take them to the room. During the months of study, the students understood how the mouse and keyboard work, the functions of the keys and buttons, how to access the internet and type topics for research, how to open a blank page on the computer screen and write short texts. Some even created social media accounts, email addresses, and sent their resumes to job sites.

In this sense, it is undeniable that the knowledge they learned thanks to the effort and dedication they put into their classes was valuable to them and, in certain situations, virtually useful in improving their living conditions, to the extent that they could open up possibilities, for example, of insertion in higher paying careers, or even enabling the use of certain common digital functionalities with greater autonomy (such as ATMs, credit cards, applications available on cell phones, etc.).

However, the central point that I aim to

highlight in this narrative is the break of these students with the cycle of impotence to which they had been subjected for a large part of their lives. Regardless of whether or not they could employ the skills and competencies they developed at school in their future professional and everyday experiences, the egalitarian potential of the school was updated and verified at the moment when those elderly housewives and precarious employees revealed the fact that they not only have the right but can, in fact, take the place of students who attend a computer laboratory and spend hours a day learning about computer technology. This is because, in those classes, they were students and, as such, could, in principle, learn any invention or concept ever conceived by human beings in their adventure through time.

Knowing that they were equals in a community of equals, they emancipated themselves and broke with the order of conforming to their part of the sensitive block, according to which women who spent their lives taking care of the home and family subsistence could never sit in school benches, recite poetry, do complex multiplication calculations, contemplate works of art, and, of course, use computers without the need for supervision. They shattered the identifying image of intellectual subservience attributed to them in sharing the sensitive, demanded their right to leisure and became interested in studying objects and knowledge outside their daily tasks.

I believe that what we, students and teacher, experienced was the establishment of a plan of possible equality, without explaining masters and without hierarchization of intelligences, in which everyone's voice circulated, was heard, considered and replicated, in which the skholé, the time free from productive obligations, the time for training and constituting people materialized in the possibility of loisir.



Perhaps this narrative will help us think about real possibilities for emancipatory experiences in free, quality public schools, built by people who strive to make them privileged spaces of skholè. Therefore, despite all attempts to domesticate and instrumentalize education, the pedagogization of time spent at school, and the continuous and repeated exclusion of the poor, black people and women from access to basic education, we defend the existence of the school form, of the free, public space in which all students can meet and study, they can dedicate themselves with attention to topics they are unfamiliar with and others

they are already interested in, where it is safe and permitted to try, make mistakes and try again. We defend school as a place of refuge, a space-time dedicated to learning for learning's sake, in which we can, at least for a few hours a day, suspend our concerns about the demands, demands and impositions of a society guided by ultra-finalization of all human activities, for the efficiency and effectiveness of our acts and productions – a place where children, young people and adults are equally welcomed as students who, regardless of their origins and prior knowledge, are considered people capable of learning anything.

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