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The Apprenticeship of Intellectual Laborers: The Possibility of Jacques Rancière's Polemical Interventions in Teacher Education

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Abstract

This essay examines the possibility of considering the polemical interventions of Jacques Rancière in pedagogy in teacher education. The limitations set forth by the traditional, structured and heavily institutionalized methodologies of teacher training led to a stratified concept of a teacher. The bureaucratic considerations and the perpetuation of an ambivalent outlook of schooling teachers led to the *depolitization* of the pedagogue manifested in pedagogical practices that fail to consider the learner as political. Although there are considerations of a more liberal and progressivist approach in teacher education, these “democratic” methodologies are still veiled by the claim that methods espoused by teacher education are “learner-centered” yet they still cling to the explicative order as the program itself creates master explicators. In *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*, Jacques Rancière explored the inadequacies of explication and its most prominent implication in pedagogy, establishing a relationship of intelligence to intelligence - a relationship characterized by infinite regression through inequality where one intelligence, the teacher's, is considered superior. By examining the ideas presented in Rancière's seminal work, this paper aims to extrapolate the pedagogical concepts in *The Ignorant Schoolmaster* with the aim of reconsidering how pedagogues should be trained in consideration of equality as an axiom rather than a goal and the exploration of the possibility of training and developing *intellectual laborers* rather than master explicators among future teachers.

Keywords: Rancière, teacher education, philosophy of education, pedagogy

Jacques Ranciere's Politics and Contemporary Pedagogy

Education as a grand venture of the species, stands in a very unlikely paradox. Experts are constantly innovating and trying to find ways to improve the quality of education and how it can cope with the ever-changing needs of society. History has laid witness to various theories on learning and models on the most effective transmission of knowledge in the learning experience. Yet the most common method employed in places of instruction is that of traditional education which procedures and methods were conceived and can be historically traced in the Age of Enlightenment. The current standing of educational development is trapped between opposing forces pulling in different directions.¹ The schools remain suspended between the tightrope of progress and stagnancy.² The predicaments that the schools are facing have left its goals suspended in ambiguity and misdirection. The problems of education are primarily rooted in the immediate social and political forces that ultimately define the goals and objectives of schooling itself.

¹ One such force is the looming problem of the privatization of schools. With the current trend of the corporatization of educational institutions, schooling has become more expensive and somewhat exclusive. What was once considered a right and an element that would put every citizen in equal footing has returned to its privileged roots as gates are erected rather than bridges in the landscape of education. The privatization of schools is another force that influences the direction that contemporary education is treading.

² Paolo Bolaños of the UST Department of Philosophy offered a compelling argument by appropriating "speed" and the intensification of acceleration on social and economic changes in the educational panorama. Bolaños mentioned in his article *Speed and its impact on education*, how Philippine education is fascinated with University rankings and accreditations which are technically based on a competitive index determined by capitalist value of production. This fascination "speeds up" the system of education and its goals and objectives in an effort to comply to the set of standards of the rankings and accrediting organizations leading to a paradox of creating students who are in a perpetual state of "catching-up" as universities continue to accelerate in a precarious fashion. (Bolaños, Paolo, "Speed and its Impact on Education", *Philippine Daily Inquirer*. October 30, 2019)

There is a historical connection between emancipation and education. This connection is what gives education its claim as an emancipatory institution in society and a factor in its irrefutable interdependence with politics. The relationship between emancipation and education has a long history that can be traced back to the enlightenment. The humanism of the 18th century that tied the enlightenment as a process of emancipation has entwined emancipation with education. For Gert Biesta, this claim is apparent in the writings of one of the greatest representatives of the period, Emmanuel Kant.³ Biesta continues by stating, “Enlightenment thus entailed a process of becoming independent or autonomous, and for Kant, this autonomy is based on the use of one’s reason.”⁴ The emancipatory project of education that Biesta associated with the Kantian response to the question “What is Enlightenment?” has continued in the past century with the work of the progressivist John Dewey who highlighted the place of democracy in education and in critical pedagogy which stands as its most prominent iteration in the contemporary landscape of education.⁵

Critical pedagogy, with its critique of liberal education and distinct emancipatory element, is a rational option that can provide a working framework in the introduction of liberatory education in teacher education. But for the educator and philosopher Gert Biesta, even the emancipative tone of critical pedagogy still clings to the *modern logic of emancipation* – a logic that highlights the need for an “emancipator” for one to be emancipated.⁶ This criticism of Biesta is rooted in the polemical interventions in pedagogy of the philosopher Jacques Rancière that criticize the existing explicative order in education. If we are to imbue the

³ Emmanuel Kant in his work *An Answer to the Question: “What is Enlightenment?”* defined the very essence of enlightenment itself as “man’s emergence from his self-incurred immaturity”. (Kant, Emmanuel. *An Answer to the Question: “What is Enlightenment?”*, trans. Mary J. Gregor. Cambridge University Press, 1996.)

⁴ Bingham, Charles & G. Biesta. *Jacques Rancière, Education, Truth, Emancipation*, 28.

⁵ Bingham, Charles & G. Biesta. *Jacques Rancière, Education, Truth, Emancipation.*, 29.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 29.

teachers of the future with a genuine emancipatory task, there is a need to provide a teacher education that veers away from explication and an imbuelement of an emancipatory role that is not aligned with the modern logic of emancipation.

Coming from the perspective of critical education, the act of schooling is political with its directive nature and the helplessness of non-neutrality of educational institutions.⁷ Education has an intricate connection with society. This is the reason why education is basing its existence on structures and systems that constitute society and with this, also inherits the challenges and complications ingrained within its hierarchies and systems. In the analysis of the existing political hierarchies and prevailing social order, Jacques Rancière offers a redefinition of what politics is. For Joseph Tanke, Rancière's return to the ancients provided the very essence of his redefinition of politics; that politics is about counting.⁸ What can be surmised in the blueprints provided by the ancients is a reduction of the political into structures of the social through compartmentalization; a division of those who can and cannot speak and those who command and those who obey. Rancière states that "The foundation of politics is not in fact more a matter of convention than of nature; it is the lack of foundation, the sheer contingency of any social order."⁹

Rancière's grand project is the redefinition of politics.¹⁰ The ontology from which the configurations of society and the division it

⁷ Giroux, Henry A. *Theory and Resistance in Education: Towards a Pedagogy for the Opposition* (Westport, CT: Bergin & Garvey, 2001), 43.

⁸ Tanke, Joseph J. *Jacques Rancière: An Introduction*. (Continuum International Publishing Group, New York, NY, 2011), 48.

⁹ *Disagreement: Politics and Philosophy*, translated by Julie Rose (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 16

¹⁰ Rancière is dismantling the firmly established structures on politics and the definition of the political. Yet to enclose Rancière and his work to a single definition is to go against his will as he stated in an interview that he does not approach the political from the perspective of identity and that every identity is "an imprisonment in a role". Rancière even

conjured is built on a hallow claim. The Aristoteleian distinction between animal sound and rational sound, the Platonic notion of geometrical and asymmetrical division of society, both characterizes the *archipolitics* and *parapolitics* of the ancients which paved the way for the rise of the logic of domination. The act of reducing the political into social has dire implications in the concept of inclusion which gave rise to the paradox of politics itself — that there can only be inclusion if there is an exclusion. With the compartmentalization of society comes the distinction between those who can speak and those who cannot.¹¹ And it is from the speechless, the uncounted, the demos, that politics is given form. Politics caused the poor to exist as an entity.¹² The division constituted by the *arche* of politics distorted the concept of democracy by turning the political into social and in the process, has become an apparatus of exemption. The uncounted are compelled to seek a way to puncture the system through the interruption of the police and the redistribution of the sensible, Rancière expanded his work and his grand redefinition of politics and pushed his intellectual horizon by linking politics to aesthetics.¹³

There has always been a distinct connection between education and politics and there are even claims that the concept of schooling itself is political with its directive nature and hierarchical structure. This is the reason why education is basing its existence on prevailing structures and systems as the configuration of society compels the schools to a state of juxtaposition. It can be said that schools resemble society itself with the

avoids to be branded as a “political philosopher”. (Rancière, Jacques. *Moments Politiques: Interventions 1977-2009*, translated by Mary Foster, New York: Seven Stories Press, 2014. 71)

¹¹ Ibid., 23.

¹² Ibid., 11.

¹³ Rancière’s writings in aesthetics, as with his works in politics, operate under a unique concept. The philosopher returns aesthetics to its true and expansive definition by relating it to perception. For Rancière, we are commonly sensing the world and with this we are also commonly understanding it. We can both perceive, we can both see. By looking at aesthetics as politics and politics as aesthetics, we can allow for the new to emerge. Aesthetics is political because it is against the social and with it comes its emancipatory predicate. It can be argued that Rancière is primary known for his works in aesthetics and politics.

system of education showcasing similarities from the hierarchical systems to the prevailing social order. Gert Biesta mentioned that the work of Jacques Rancière deserves an educational point of entry.¹⁴ The linking of the political with the pedagogical is not a novel concept and not distinctly Rancièrian. Education theorists and philosophers alike have crafted and exemplified the link between politics and pedagogy.¹⁵ But what differs Jacques Rancière's polemical interventions in pedagogy is not the goal that it strives to attain but rather on what particular axiom should education base its principles. For Rancière, it must begin with the idea that all intelligences are equal and discover what can be done under that presupposition.¹⁶ It is through this concept of radical equality that I propose a rethinking of the emancipatory role of the schoolmaster starting in the way that teachers are educated.

The Apprenticeship of the Intellectual Master

Teaching is often considered as one of the oldest professions. Even its claim for professionalization is questioned as it is considered as something that is already embedded in culture and civilization that even the primitive ancestors of man engaged in the act of teaching. It can even be claimed that one is already born a teacher. The capacity to teach

¹⁴ Bingham, Charles & G. Biesta. *Jacques Rancière, Education, Truth, Emancipation*. (Continuum: London, UK, 2010), 25.

¹⁵ Even the Marxist Louis Althusser, Rancière's former mentor, discussed the hegemonic tendency of schools by treating education as an ideological state apparatus. As major ideological state apparatuses, the schools serve as training grounds for citizenship and labor. This served as one of the foundations of what will come to be known as *critical pedagogy*, yet scholars are critical against the Althusserian concept of schooling. Althusser adopted a reductionist view on schooling treating it as one-sided. What critics are highlighting is that Althusser's reductionist schema relegates the students into static agents, demeaning and even discounting the capacity of human beings to participate in the power struggle against hegemonic forces. This concept ignored the idea that the schools are social and political sites where the interplay of domination, struggle and conception takes place. (Giroux, Henry A. *Theory and Resistance in Education: Towards a Pedagogy for the Opposition*, 78)

¹⁶ Rancière, Jacques. *The Ignorant Schoolmaster: Five Lessons in Intellectual Emancipation*, translated and introduced by Kristin Ross, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991, 46.

is natural as it is deemed important for the transmission of knowledge to ensure the survival of society. This natural tendency was recognized by the pragmatist John Dewey:

We are all born to be educators, to be parents, as we are not born to be engineers, or sculptors, or musicians, or painters. Native capacity for education is therefore much more common than native capacity for any other calling. Were it not so, human society could not hold together at all.¹⁷

Dewey did not fail to state the need to harness and improve the natural capacity to teach. The proper cultivation of the inherent teaching capacity must be directed to ensure the survival of society. Much hope has been given to pedagogy to ascertain that the transmission of human knowledge and culture will endure the passing of generations. This puts the teacher in a position of utmost importance as she is considered as the lifeline of society that is trying to cling to its tradition, culture, and survival.

Teachers are then trained to become pedagogical masters equipped with teaching techniques, curricular knowledge, and a degree of specialization on a particular subject matter. This cultivation is apparent on how teacher education is curricularly developed and structured. The schoolmaster is trained to become an explicator – an educator who possess mastery of the subject and equally proficient in explaining it to the students. This may sound ideal in the traditional notion of transmission of knowledge but for Rancière, this keeps the enduring *myth of pedagogy* alive.

The teacher becomes a master in all sense of the word because of the pedagogical responsibilities resting in her shoulder. What is

¹⁷ Dewey, John. "On Education". In *What Psychology Can Do*, Edited by Reginald D. Archambault. (Random House Inc., 1964), 199.

associated with this position of superiority is an exclusivist inclination, a certain degree of positionality — and the tendency to resort to *explication*. The teacher assumes the position of the master and wears the mantle of someone who transmits learning and forms minds simultaneously according to an ordered progression.¹⁸ This explicative order creates a dichotomy between superior intelligence, which is the position of the intellectual master, and inferior intelligence, the intelligence of the young child and the common man.¹⁹ This is the *myth of pedagogy*, the division of the world into knowing minds and ignorant ones. In *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*, Rancière stated:

The pedagogical myth, we said, divides the world into two. More precisely, it divides intelligence into two. It says that there is an inferior intelligence and a superior one. The former registers perceptions by chance, retains them, interprets and repeats them imperially, within the close circle of habit and need. This is the intelligence of the young child and the common man. The superior intelligence knows things by reason, proceeds by method, from the simple to complex, from the part to the whole. It is this intelligence that allows the master to transmit his knowledge by adapting it to the intellectual capacities of the student and allows him to verify that the student has satisfactorily understood what he learned. Such is the principle of explication.²⁰

This dichotomy of minds further strengthens the position of the teacher as an intellectual master and at the same time, relegates the student as dependent to the master. The capability to reason and understand complexities lies in the master alone, that “understanding is what the child cannot do without the master”.²¹ What the intellectual

¹⁸ Rancière, Jacques. *The Ignorant Schoolmaster: Five Lessons in Intellectual Emancipation*, 3.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 7.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Ibid.*, 6.

master does to the student is stultification through explanation. Explanation is the myth of pedagogy. This is apparent in the way that teachers are trained to become professional educators. Teachers are trained to become grandstanders from whom the fountain of knowledge springs from. Mastery of one's specialization and instructional proficiency are still considered as the most important qualities that an educator must possess. This inevitably leads the teacher to fortify her position as someone who is intellectually superior to the student. Even the psychological background of pedagogy in teacher education still constitutes a downplaying of the capability of the child to understand.²²

Teachers become master explicators and education remains as explanatory as ever. It can be argued that new progressivist and critical movements in education has somewhat addressed the issues regarding the teacher-centeredness of educator training as movements like critical pedagogy offers a more liberatory tone in pedagogy.²³ As critical pedagogy pushes for the intellectualization of the teaching profession, the teacher is expected to develop a language of critique that ultimately relates with the language of possibility.²⁴ From the perspective of critical pedagogy, for the schools to be considered as purveyors of the emancipatory process, they must not be treated as mere instructional sites but a place for cultural and social reproduction. For Henry Giroux, a proponent of critical pedagogy, the schools are not just a place of learning but also a cultural and societal site where students and teachers

²² The prominence of the psychological studies on Jean Piaget, Lev Vygotsky and other important names in developmental psychology in the discussions regarding the foundations of education is undeniable and remain as one of the key elements in various professional education courses even if the developmental stages determined by human biology is now generally rejected in psychology.

²³ It must be noted that Rancière's polemical intervention in pedagogy should not be classified as critical pedagogy. His work should not be confused with the 'unveiling' of critical pedagogy.

²⁴ Giroux, Henry A. *Theory and Resistance in Education: Towards a Pedagogy for the Opposition*, 69.

engage to make meaning.²⁵ It implores the idea that schools can be viable agents of social change if only it can shed its positivist rationality that affects how the schools, as centers of learning, conduct the education of their students.²⁶ It is the critical pedagogue's role, as a transformative intellectual, to make the pedagogical more political and the political more pedagogical.²⁷

This concept may sound liberating and empowering on the part of the students. But Charles Bingham and Gert Biesta, coming from a Rancièrian perspective, state that even the liberatory language of critical pedagogy is subject to the *myth of pedagogy* because it is still operating under the notion of explanation.²⁸ Liberation and the exposition of the oppressive nature of traditional education is *unveiled* by the critical pedagogue through explanation. This concept of a liberatory education puts the critical pedagogue in the forefront of the emancipatory project of education and this noble endeavor is being subjected to heavy criticism. For Biesta, the notion of *demystification* plays a central role in critical pedagogy as it attempts to expose how power works upon one's consciousness.²⁹ This concept of demystification can only be possible if there is another individual who is not subjected to the workings of power therefore imbuing the said individual with the capacity to "lift the veil". Biesta is stating that critical pedagogy and the role that it bestowed to the teacher in the emancipatory project of education still adheres to what he coined as the "modern logic" of emancipation which posits that

²⁵ Giroux, Henry. *Teachers as Intellectuals: Toward a Critical Pedagogy of Learning*. (Bergin and Garvey Publishers Inc. Granby, MA., 1988), 127.

²⁶ Giroux's critical pedagogy is heavily anchored on the concepts and principles of the Frankfurt School. Luminaries of critical theory namely Adorno, Horkheimer, and Marcuse are often mentioned in his works particularly the critique on logical positivism and the technocratic view of science that threatens the notion of subjectivity and critical thinking in schools. (Giroux, Henry. *A Theory and Resistance in Education: Towards a Pedagogy for the Opposition*, 15)

²⁷ Giroux, Henry. *Teachers as Intellectuals: Toward a Critical Pedagogy of Learning*, 127.

²⁸ Bingham, Charles & G. Biesta. *Jacques Rancière, Education, Truth, Emancipation*, 21.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 30.

in order for an individual to be emancipated, there is a need for “someone else” – an emancipator in the form of the teacher.³⁰ Critical pedagogy is still encapsulated in the explicative order that adheres to the contemporary notion of emancipation that instills *dependency* on the part of the learner.³¹ Even more is the tendency of critical pedagogy to view the child as not yet political contrary to Rancière’s position that the child is already political.³² As for Bingham and Biesta, “The child already speaks. The child needs no knowledge from the master to speak again.”³³

The liberatory tone of critical pedagogy puts the critical pedagogue in the forefront of the emancipatory project but its place in the curriculum of teacher education is not secured and discussions regarding the emancipative role of teachers are often intrinsically added to the curriculum of teacher education.³⁴ As Henry Giroux, the scholar who coined the term “critical pedagogy”³⁵ puts it, “Rarely do teacher

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Biesta, Gert. “A New Logic of Emancipation: The Methodology of Jacques Rancière,” *Educational Theory*, Vol. 60, No. 1: 39-59, 2010, 45.

³² Galloway, Sarah. “Reconsidering Emancipatory Education: Staging a Conversation Between Paulo Freire and Jacques Rancière,” *Educational Theory*, Vol. 62, No. 2: 163-184, 2012. 172.

³³ Bingham, Charles & G. Biesta. *Jacques Rancière, Education, Truth, Emancipation*, 72.

³⁴ The term “intrinsic curriculum” is derived from Elliot Eisner’s *The Three Curricula*. For Eisner there are three curriculums that schools teach. The extrinsic curriculum which serves like an “education menu” that explicitly states what can be learned from a particular institution. Its most prominent example is the syllabus. The intrinsic curriculum, on which I aptly put the emancipatory role of teachers in teacher education programs, are learnings that are not specifically stated in the curriculum but are “intrinsically” included. Another example would be how the schools put the primacy of the mind over the body with school hours primarily spent on intellectual tasks with only a token of time given to physical tasks. Eisner’s third curriculum is the null curriculum borne out of his theory that teachers are not just responsible for what they teach but also for what they do not teach. The null curriculum are contents that are consciously removed by the teacher. (Eisner, Elliot W. *The Educational Imagination*. (Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc. New York, NY), 88)

³⁵ Henry Giroux is considered by critical pedagogy scholars as the one who coined the term “critical pedagogy” itself with his association and development of the words of the Brazilian Paulo Freire. Giroux’s critical pedagogy is heavily anchored on the concepts and principles of the Frankfurt School. Luminaries of critical pedagogy namely Adorno, Horkheimer, and Marcuse were often mentioned in his works particularly the critique on

education programs encourage student teachers to take seriously the role of the intellectual who works in the interest of an emancipatory vision”.³⁶ The inclusion of a nigh unquantifiable concept such as the emancipatory role of teachers in the curriculum of teacher education is a noble and necessary task. Critical pedagogy, with its critique of liberal education is a good springboard for such an initiative. But upon considering the polemical interventions of Jacques Rancière in pedagogy, the glaring gaps of critical pedagogy regarding the emancipatory project of education may give birth to new problems as it provides inadequate answers to the age-old questions orbiting the nexus of emancipation and education particularly on how it cannot separate itself from the “modern logic” of emancipation. Through the lens of Rancière’s polemical interventions in pedagogy, specifically the criticism of the explicative order in education, we may examine even the most glorified “liberatory” or “student-centered” methods utilized by teacher education programs.

Even the most democratic method glorified by teacher education suffers from explicatory tendencies. The Socratic dialogue is renowned for its seeming learner-centered method as the teacher becomes a “midwife of knowledge”, an identity that reduces the role of a teacher to a mere facilitator as the student through the dialogue brings out what is conceived to be already there.³⁷ Yet, a careful reading of the *Meno* will prove that there is still a lot of teacher-initiated learning going on as

logical positivism and the technocratic view of science that threatens the notion of subjectivity and critical thinking in schools. (Giroux, Henry. *A Theory and Resistance in Education: Towards a Pedagogy for the Opposition*, 15)

³⁶ Giroux, Henry. *Teachers as Intellectuals: Toward a Critical Pedagogy of Learning*. (Bergin and Garvey Publishers Inc. Granby, MA., 1988), 161.

³⁷ The Socratic method still remains a popular teaching method in contemporary pedagogy. In teacher education and training, Socratic dialogue is still considered the “gold standard” in pedagogy as it is thought to be a *learner-centered pedagogy*. The method supposedly grants the students a certain degree of ownership to an acquired skill or knowledge therefore making them more responsible to their own learning. As the common theme of modern education is to reduce the influence of the teacher in the teaching-learning process, the Socratic method still enjoys its lofty status as the epitome of learner-centered pedagogy.

Socrates tries to make the boy slave realize that what he thought he did not know is just locked inside of him waiting to be discovered.³⁸ The impact of Socrates to the slave boy confirms the slave boy's identity by engulfing him in the learning paradox of "How one can go looking for something when one doesn't know what he is looking for". The slave boy becomes the "student of pedagogy" and like the perfect murderer³⁹, Socrates was able to conceal his participation in the act of learning. The Socratic dialogue seems to be the holy grail of teaching as it allows the teacher to not leave an imprint and make the student in control of his own learning experience. The Socratic method is the fool's gold of pedagogy. Walter Kohan discussed these "other faces" of Socrates:

Socrates takes everyone to his house, to his place. As a teacher, Socrates knows what everyone should know and schools his students persistently in this knowledge - his knowledge, what he considers the knowledge. There is no space for creation, or invention of the other.⁴⁰

The Socratic Method ultimately enters the door of persuasion which makes the student or the child to realize that he is outmatched by the teacher posing as Socrates. The relationship is still that of intelligence to intelligence and like the stultifying schoolmaster, Socrates leads the learner into his own house and his own understanding. Rancière echoes this concern, the Socratic method is keeping the *myth of pedagogy* alive – the Socratic Method is concealed stultification. For Rancière, the Socratic method is the most formidable form of stultification.⁴¹ It is an

³⁸ Biesta, Gert. "Receiving the Gift of Teaching: From 'Learning From' to 'Being Taught By'". *Stud Philos Educ*, Issue 32: 449-461 (2013), 453.

³⁹ Biesta quoting Sharon Todd, "The teacher, like a perfect murderer, makes it appear that teaching has not taken place, who leaves the scene without a trace, and who, moreover, is convinced of his own innocence." (Ibid. 453)

⁴⁰ Kennedy, David. "Aion, Kairos and Chronos: Fragments of An Endless Conversation on Childhood, Philosophy and Education". *Childhood and Philosophy*, Vol. 4, No. 10: 6-22. (2008), 18.

⁴¹ Rancière, Jacques. *The Ignorant Schoolmaster: Five Lessons in Intellectual Emancipation*, 59.

interrogation that pretends to lead the student to his own knowledge. This illusion of autonomously discovering the “truth” resembles a process of *unveiling* as what is to be revealed is something that the master wants the student to see. The “truth” of the master stultifies the student. This monopoly of the truth is the point of objection in the pedagogical intervention of Rancière as he opines that “truth” does not lie in the hands of the master, perfectly enunciated when he stated, “No one has a relationship to the truth if he is not on his own orbit”.⁴² What can be understood from this statement is that “truth” can be taken away in the equation of learning thereby reconfiguring the position of the teacher from a place of epistemic authority who has exclusive possession of the truth.

What then is the possibility of developing a pedagogy that is not built on the foundation of explanation and the roving influence of stultifying masters? Jacques Rancière offers an argument that instead of espousing a relationship between intelligence with intelligence, what the schoolmaster must foster is a relationship of *will* against the *will*.⁴³ We can emancipate ourselves through the *will* and not by intelligence. The problem is that there is only one relationship that is operating in the schools, the relationship between intelligence to intelligence. This relationship promotes stultification as one intelligence (the student’s) is subordinated to another.⁴⁴ What must be established is an education relation between two wills as Rancière puts it, “The method of equality was above all a method of the will. One could learn by oneself and without a master explicator when one wanted to, propelled by one’s own desire or by the constraint of the situation.”⁴⁵ What this implies is not the removal of the teacher in the educative process but rather a *rethinking* of the relationship between the two prominent agents in the teaching-learning process – a relationship of two wills. Through this, the

⁴² Ibid., 59.

⁴³ Ibid., 69.

⁴⁴ Rancière, Jacques. *The Ignorant Schoolmaster: Five Lessons in Intellectual Emancipation*, 13.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 12.

subordination of one intelligence to another is eliminated from the equation opening the possibility of considering the supposition that all intelligences are equal and with this comes the opportunity to treat equality as an axiom rather than a goal. As Rancière has always been adhering to the idea that equality can only be achieved not by beginning from inequality but by starting from equality. It is impossible to attain equality if it is only treated as a goal. The *pedagogical myth* understands the world through the dichotomy between the superior and the inferior intelligence. With this, the gap between the two continues to persist and the goal of equality remains far from being realized. It would be logical to question the presupposition of equality considering the fact that the world in itself offers a variety of examples of inequality; it is then easy to state that intelligences are different. For Rancière, the point is not to prove that all intelligence is equal, what is far more important is to know what can be done under the supposition of equality.⁴⁶

What educators adhering to the ideas of Rancière must be careful with is to not just consider the interventions of the philosopher as a mere version or a portrayal of the teacher as a facilitator. To do that is to miss the entire point of Rancière. The *will* is different from the psychological concept of other pedagogical schools of thought.⁴⁷ The *will* is ultimately political. It is the recognition of the political subject that she is equal the schoolmaster because she has a language and is capable of thinking. And with the capacity to think comes the capacity to speak and the inherent capability to emancipate oneself.

The Promise of Self-Emancipation

The cultivation of one's reason will ultimately help an individual in her quest for autonomy and this capacity is developed through

⁴⁶ Ibid., 46

⁴⁷ One of the criticisms against Freirean concept of the child is the treatment of Freire's pedagogy of the oppressed as the childhood being a "psychological state".

education. Following the Kantian notion of “emergence from one’s self-incurred immaturity” is the idea that education is not just the insertion of an individual in the existing society but an “orientation towards autonomy and freedom”.⁴⁸ The contemporary experience of pedagogy is now associated as a process that should prepare the learner for autonomy and ultimately, freedom. It is thus conceived that education must be considered as a process of liberation.⁴⁹ At the forefront of the emancipatory project of education are the pedagogues themselves. The work of Rancière establishes the problematic account of the emancipatory project of the Enlightenment.⁵⁰ Putting the pedagogue at the forefront of the emancipatory process harbors *dependency* on the part of the “to-be emancipated”. That emancipation is something that is given by scholars and schoolmasters.⁵¹

Discussions on the emancipatory role of education remains overlooked as authorities in education are still focused on the neoliberal goals of education in adherence with its positivist nature.⁵² The emancipatory project of education is still not gaining a foothold in the overly crowded curriculum of teacher education and if it is able to do so, it would still entail an emancipatory education that it wishes to eliminate – an education that is still in the grasp of explication. What Rancière offers is a pedagogical turn, a ‘new logic’ of emancipation⁵³ that offers an avenue to absolve education from its explicatory past. Throughout its history, education has been primarily shaped by explication. The great lecturers and the enlightened ones stood in the foreground of education for centuries bridging the gap between ignorance and understanding,

⁴⁸ Ibid., 28.

⁴⁹ Biesta, Gert. “Don’t Be Fooled by Ignorant Schoolmasters: On the Role of the Teacher in Emancipatory Education”, *Policy Futures in Education*, Vol. 15, No. 1: 52-73, 2017. 53

⁵⁰ Bingham, Charles. “Ranciere and Education”, *Encyclopedia of Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 2017.

⁵¹ Bingham, Charles & G. Biesta. *Jacques Rancière, Education, Truth, Emancipation*, 43.

⁵² Ibid., 19.

⁵³ Coined by Gert Biesta in the article *A New Logic of Emancipation*.

making herself an indispensable factor in the educative process. The master explicator stands as the one who lifts the veil allowing the child to see; the emancipator who initiates the emancipatory process. For Rancière, nothing could be further from the truth, for it is the explicator who needs the incapable as it is the former who constitutes the incapable as such.⁵⁴

Considering the polemical interventions of Rancière offers an opportunity to rid teacher training of the illusion of ‘learner-centered’ pedagogical methods and the misconceptions of contemporary logic of emancipation. For the claim of being ‘learner-centered’ stands on hollow ground if its foundation is built on explication. For Rancière, central to emancipation is the consciousness ‘of what an intelligence can do when it considers itself equal to any other and considers any other equal to itself’.⁵⁵ What it tries to instill is the recognition of the capability of the political subject to utilize language as a verification that she is of equal intelligence. If teacher education begins to instill the Rancièrian idea of recognizing equality as an axiom rather than a goal, the possibility of teacher education to return the teacher to the original concept of the word “pedagogue” is a step closer to its realization.⁵⁶

Reconsidering the Schoolmaster

There have been various attempts in the perusal and association of Rancière’s interventions in pedagogy on initiatives that are truly

⁵⁴ Rancière, Jacques. *The Ignorant Schoolmaster: Five Lessons in Intellectual Emancipation*, 6.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 39.

⁵⁶ Interestingly, the word “pedagogue” has acquired a new meaning in the current context of education. The word is now associated with a teacher who is strict, dull and generally directed by old-fashioned methods in teaching. Primarily stemming from the original sense of the Greek word, *paidagōgos* – a person who guides children to school. The operative sense of “guiding” is that which has been lost in the current iteration of the pedagogue as he becomes more of a taskmaster standing in a position of intellectual superiority rather than a guiding force in the student’s intellectual development.

pedagogical in nature.⁵⁷ But one must tread carefully in the overlapping of two connected but diversified landscapes such as pedagogy and philosophy. There are certain misconceptions about the “ignorant schoolmaster” of Jacques Rancière and most prominent among these is the understanding that one can do away with the teacher. This is a reverberation of the misunderstanding that emancipation is constituted as “freedom to learn”.⁵⁸ What Rancière actually implies is that learning should not be dependent upon explication. What is to be done away with is the ‘master explicator’ because the stultifying schoolmaster is the main obstacle to emancipation.⁵⁹ The misconception exemplifies one of the most common problems in philosophy of education and the conduct on how philosophy is treated in the landscape of education. What one must be wary about is the appropriation of Rancière’s work in the field of education and the challenge and pitfalls that every philosophical attribution in education will inevitably face.⁶⁰

Rancière’s polemical interventions in pedagogy deserves special attention particularly in the matter of philosophical attribution due to the fact that various scholars and even Rancière considers *The Ignorant Schoolmaster* as a political piece rather than pedagogical. This presents a variety of problems in the question of appropriation for to pick some

⁵⁷ Among such, one of the most prominent is Philosophy for Children (P4C). The proponents of the Philosophy for Children movement focused on the question of what childhood is and their capacity and power to think and reason. What the proponents of Philosophy for Children are raising is the idea that childhood holds a certain power because of a child’s unique relationship with questions, as with a philosopher, a question is a tool or sometimes, a weapon for a child. (Kennedy, David and Walter Kohan. “Aion, Kairos and Chronos: Fragments of An Endless Conversation on Childhood, Philosophy and Education. *Childhood and Philosophy*, Vol. 4, No. 10: 6-22. (2008), 11) The “democratic” methods and concepts of P4C has led scholars to compare and relate it with the pedagogical ideas of Jacques Rancière.

⁵⁸ Biesta, Gert. *Don’t Be Fooled by Ignorant Schoolmasters: On the Role of the Teacher in Emancipatory Education*, 63.

⁵⁹ Bingham, Charles & G. Biesta. *Jacques Rancière, Education, Truth, Emancipation*, 47.

⁶⁰ The progressivist educator and philosopher, John Dewey, did not hide his disappointment in the misappropriation of his progressive education in actual pedagogy which compelled him to reassess his progressive principles and made him wrote a lengthy essay regarding appropriation of his concepts in actual pedagogical practice.

concepts that can easily be adapted in pedagogy is to shed a bleak and hollow light on Rancière's grand project of redefining politics. This is the common pitfall that philosophers and theorists in education have failed to avoid. To treat Rancière's ideas in such insubstantial consideration is to perpetuate the inadequacy and the domination of stultification through explanation. One only needs to be reminded of Rancière's original treatment of his works as 'interventions of' rather than 'theories on'. The same goes with his polemical interventions on pedagogy, as Gert Biesta puts it, "To once again consider a revisiting of the figure of the ignorant schoolmaster not as a paradigm for all dimensions of education but as a figure to consider in the question of emancipatory education".⁶¹ The distinction between 'stultification and 'emancipation' as Rancière discusses, is not a distinction between methods of instruction.⁶²

The reconsideration of the schoolmaster deserves an important position in the appropriation of Rancièrian polemical interventions in pedagogy. The rethinking of teacher education, in an effort to consider equality as an axiom, will pave the way for discussions on empowerment through literacy, redefining the relationship of the learner and the instruments of learning, and on *truth* in education. It all begins from the apprenticeship of the ignorant schoolmaster. If the gateway of politics is pedagogy, then that makes the teacher, the ignorant schoolmaster, its gatekeeper.

Teachers as Intellectual Laborers

Teacher education has always tried to provide a prototype of the good teacher. Institutions have established an almost non-negotiable criteria in trying to come up with what a teacher should be. The

⁶¹ Biesta, Gert. *Don't Be Fooled by Ignorant Schoolmasters: On the Role of the Teacher in Emancipatory Education*, 64.

⁶² Bingham, Charles & G. Biesta. *Jacques Rancière, Education, Truth, Emancipation*, 6.

professionalization of the teacher can also be considered as a form of police. Progressive and critical education theorists push for the intellectualization of teachers. Henry Giroux, a critical pedagogue and a cultural critic, coined the term “transformative intellectuals”.⁶³ It may sound like a grand branding for a noble undertaking but the term itself highlights the position of the teacher as a ‘transformative’ agent who are tasked to create the conditions that give students the capacity to struggle.⁶⁴ Once again giving life to the notion of dependency that defines the contemporary logic of emancipation. Scholars still write imposingly and heavily lean on explanatory devices. Biesta notes, “In scholarly writing, it is particularly tempting to speak in a way that is policing rather than in a way that changes the redistribution of the sensible.”⁶⁵ The directiveness can be attributed to the notion of intellectualization defined by the tyranny of metrics and the grip of specialization.

Rancière’s portrayal of the intellectual is as distinct as his politics, “Intellectual as a noun is meaningless except as a category for the distribution of thought and political action.”⁶⁶ If emancipative education truly wants to make the pedagogical political and the political pedagogical, teacher education must be open to the process of autocritique and consider that the would-be teachers are political subjects and are not just intellectuals meant to interpret their own struggle, reveling in their own capacity to emancipate the other but also laborers who are ‘ignorant’ of inequality in recognition of the *will*. In a somewhat different context but shared essence, Rancière claims that “intellectual and worker are symmetrical, in that they have the potential to declare and demonstrate the equality of anyone with anyone.”⁶⁷

⁶³ Giroux, Henry A. *Teachers as Intellectuals: Toward a Critical Pedagogy of Learning*, 128.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 128.

⁶⁵ Bingham, Charles & G. Biesta. *Jacques Rancière, Education, Truth, Emancipation*, 147.

⁶⁶ Rancière, Jacques. *Moments Politiques: Interventions 1977-2009*, 67.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 65.

Teachers must become intellectual laborers who begin from the presupposition that all intelligences are equal for only then can the circle of inequality be broken. A teacher must not be encapsulated in the definition imposed to her by the system of education. For Rancière:

A teacher is part of the reproduction of the university social system. This does not prevent him from working, if he wishes, to support forms of intellectual equality. But this requires that he distinguishes his function. A teacher is not the same thing as a scholar. A scholar is not the same thing as a citizen. One can certainly be all three things at the same time, but attempts to unify them under a single logic — defining oneself, for example, as someone who trains citizens by transmitting knowledge — will always lean towards the dominant social fiction.⁶⁸

One must begin from the presupposition of equality because if the schoolmaster embarks on a trajectory of inequality, it would be impossible to reach equality. An educator confined within her self-imposed definition as ‘emancipator’ through her profession betrays her commitment to equality and the beginning of losing her ability to puncture the structures established in education and in turn, perpetuates the regression towards inequality in society. This idea must be harbored from the very beginning of one’s journey as a teacher.

Conclusion

Education in the contemporary context has been effective in preserving society and upholding the status quo. What is apparent in this prioritization of values in education is that the schools advertently (or inadvertently) neglect the question of intellectual emancipation and the problem of inequality.⁶⁹ As long as education begins from a fundamental

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 147.

inequality, the aspiration of equality remains within the realm of the impossible. If we are to strive for equality, as for Rancière, we must begin by thinking about what can be done if we consider equality as a presupposition. And there is no better place to begin than the education of future teachers. If we are to renew the nexus between emancipation and education, it is imperative to break away from the grip of explication that has defined the emancipatory role of the teacher for generations. This would entail a rethinking of how teachers are educated as they are historically molded to wear the mantle of the superior intelligence in the classroom who continuously reinforce the enduring myth of pedagogy.

Ultimately, as this paper invites a rethinking of the way that society educates its future teachers, I am compelled to ask the question, “How should we educate our teachers?”. First and most important, there is a need of the instilling of the presupposition of equality and the recognition that all intelligences are equal. Second, is the recognition that education should be an emancipatory process wherein the teacher must not subscribe to the modern logic of emancipation that adheres to a fundamental dependency to an emancipator. We have long produced master explicators when what is needed are intellectual laborers. One only needs to be reminded of the Rancièrian protagonist, Joseph Jacotot⁷⁰, an intellectual laborer and an ignorant schoolmaster, who did not just recognize a person’s natural capacity to teach but was also able to realize that each individual, a master or a laborer, a student or a schoolmaster, has equal capacity to learn.

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⁷⁰ A barely considered and rarely mentioned figure in teacher education.

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