

FROM CRITIQUE TO LIBERATION: KNOWLEDGE AS A TOOL OF EMANCIPATION IN RANCIÈRE AND FREIRE



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ABSTRACT

This article aims to highlight the criticisms undertaken by Jacques Rancière and Paulo Freire to traditional pedagogies, as well as to bring to light their proposals in favor of an education aimed at the emancipation and liberation of the subjects. From the postulates of these authors, it is possible to perceive the questioning of the idea of knowledge as a privilege of a few and to know the defense they make regarding the universal capacity to learn and transform reality. In the eyes of these thinkers, the power structures established in society are reflected in education, thus perpetuating inequalities. However, their pedagogies point to transformation through practices that stimulate autonomy and reflection. Emancipation is, therefore, a continuous path of search for truth, through reflection and transformative action, where each individual can emancipate himself and the other, enabling the construction of a more just, humane and egalitarian society.

Keywords: Emancipation. Awareness. Equality.

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INTRODUCTION

This work explores the criticisms made by Jacques Rancière and Paulo Freire to the traditional models of education, as well as presents the pedagogical propositions presented by them, as an alternative to the model criticized by them, which aim, above all, at the emancipation of students.

Both authors, as will be deepened below, question the idea that knowledge is a privilege of the few and defend the ability of all to learn and transform reality. In other words, the authors propose a structural and systemic rupture, aiming at the destitution of constituted power and annulling the relations of power and oppression.

THE CRITIQUE OF TRADITIONAL TEACHING AND EMANCIPATION IN THE VIEW OF JACQUES RANCIÈRE

Jacques Rancière, in the book "The Ignorant Master" presents us with his criticism of the traditional educational system, which he calls "the old" and at the same time defines society as "pedagogicizing". For the author, such a system is characterized by the belief in the inequality of intelligences, in which the teacher, the subject who holds knowledge, explains the world, through contents, to students, who are inferior people, that is, incapable of learning by themselves.

Thus, a power relationship is established, which, according to Rancière, perpetuates social inequality, since, in his view, knowledge becomes a privilege of the few. In this way, Rancière points out that

The traditional pedagogy of the neutral transmission of knowledge, as well as the modernist pedagogies of knowledge adapted to the state of society, remain on the same side, in relation to the alternative posed by Jacotot. Both take equality as their goal, that is, they take inequality as their starting point. Both are, above all, trapped in the circle of the pedagogized society. They attribute to the School the phantasmatic power of achieving social equality or, at least, of reducing the "social fracture". (Rancière, 2020, p. 14)

Rancière also proposed a critique of the vision of a homogeneous society, which would be represented by a great school, in which some subjects are considered backward, in such a way that they need civilization. In his conception, this perspective legitimizes a hierarchical structure in which the "best of the class" govern, perpetuating inequalities, under the guise of "meritocracy".

Society is thus represented as a vast school that has its savages to civilize and its students in difficulty to recover. Under these conditions, school education is

increasingly entrusted with the phantasmatic task of overcoming the gap between the proclaimed equality of conditions and the existing inequality [...] (Rancière, 2020, p. 14-15)

Rancière continues in his critique, analyzing the need for explanation as a precondition for learning to happen. Thus, the author argues that the explanatory method creates a model based on impotence, which makes the student dependent on the figure of the teacher. Universal teaching, which we will present later, on the other hand, would liberate the student by recognizing in him the ability to learn for himself.

In his reflection, the author operationalizes a critique of the society of inequality, which in his view is constituted by a system of domination based on the belief in the superiority of some over others. For him, this society perpetuates unreason, that is, a way of thinking that would be based on comparison and contempt.

In his writings, Rancière demonstrates how passions and the incessant and unbridled search for power lead individuals to the perversion of the will and the distraction of intelligence. For the author, rhetoric would be, in this context, an instrument aimed at one's own domination, as a mechanism that seeks to silence the other, or even in his words "rhetoric, as has been said, has war as its principle. It does not seek understanding, but the annihilation of the adverse will. Rhetoric is a word of revolt against the poetic condition of the speaking being" (Rancière, 2020, p. 122).

According to Rancière, the engine of intelligence is will. As he points out, intelligence is the ability to see, compare, and report, and will, in turn, is the driving force of this. For him, lack of will, laziness and distraction are obstacles to the effectiveness of learning. It is because of this that he states that "man is a will served by an intelligence" (Rancière, 2020, p. 84), or even, "It must be said, on the contrary, that it is the lack of will that makes intelligence err. The original sin of the spirit is not precipitation, it is distraction, it is absence" (Rancière, 2020, p. 84).

In opposition to traditional teaching, which he criticized, Jacques Rancière introduced us to Professor Joseph Jacotot, a true revolutionary, who stated that an "ignorant" can teach another "ignorant". Thus, the Jacotot method or "universal teaching" is based on the idea that intelligences are equivalent, that is, it takes as a principle the equality of intelligences, where everyone is capable of learning by themselves, through observation, comparison and reflection.

But how can we admit that an ignorant person can be a cause of science for another ignorant one? Jacotot's own experience was ambiguous in his status as a French teacher. Since she had at least shown that it was not the master's knowledge that taught the student, nothing prevented him from teaching something other than his own knowledge: teaching what he did not know. (Rancière, 2020, p. 33)

It was from Jacotot's experience, in the mission of teaching French to students who spoke Dutch, that the understanding arose that the master would not need to have specific knowledge for the students to learn. For him, the most important thing would be the act of learning itself, especially learning by oneself, having the teacher as a guide that stimulates the students' capacity. Thus, he affirmed that "there is no man on Earth who has not learned something by himself and without a master explainer." (Rancière, 2020, p. 35).

As Jacques Rancière points out, veracity is fundamental, a *sine qua non* condition, for the process of emancipation to occur. For the author, this means the ability to recognize oneself as a thinking being, and thus, to assume oneself capable and act imbued by such truth, having in communication a means by which intelligences connect and stimulate each other, in a mutual way.

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For the author, communication is not based on a pre-established agreement on the meaning of words, but rather on the mutual desire to make oneself understood and to understand each other. For him, the will to communicate is the bridge between intelligences. "One cannot agree with words the meaning of words. One wants to speak, the other wants to guess — that is all. From this concurrence of wills results a thought visible to two men at the same time." (Rancière, 2020, p. 94).

It becomes important, for those of us who study the learning of the arts, to realize that in his work, Rancière, expands his analysis in such a way that it reaches the field of the arts. This author argues that the arts constitute a language accessible to all, not being an object restricted to a few subjects, who have already begun. He also argues that

everyone has the ability to feel and express their feelings, that is, their own self, their own essence, and he understands that the arts are enabling this unveiling.

The author emphasizes the importance of translation and its opposite, counter-translation, in the appreciation of the arts. In his arguments, Rancière presents arguments regarding the understanding or comprehension of the artistic work, where in his view, such a movement consists of reconstituting, in itself, the artist's experience, recognizing itself as an equal to him, that is, an encounter between human subjects.

Despite all this construction of a scenario that points to unreason and inequality, Rancière does not bring us a proposition of a social revolution, as a society, as a whole. In its place, the author proposes a movement of individual resistance, in such a way that he values the role of the "emancipator", who for him is the one who, through his example, manages to demonstrate to others the possibilities of learning for oneself, of recognizing the equality that exists between intelligences. As the author explains: "but every man can, at any moment, emancipate himself and emancipate another, announce this benefit to others and increase the number of men who recognize themselves as such and no longer pretend to be inferior superiors" (Rancière, 2020, p. 140).

In this way, Rancière concludes that the process of intellectual emancipation constitutes an individual and continuous process, which takes place in the incessant search for truth and in communication with the other. For him, society will never be perfect, however, he understands that it is possible to multiply the number of men who use their reason and recognize their equality.

If every family did what I say, the nation would soon be emancipated, not from the emancipation which the wise bestow by their explanations at the height of the minds of the people, but from the emancipation which we conquer, even against the wise, when we instruct ourselves. (Rancière, 2020, p. 140)

The author, by presenting us with his reflections, leads us to rethink education and society, invites us to question the power structures that perpetuate inequalities and proposes a pedagogical model based on the equality of intelligences, willpower and the search for veracity. They are calls to individual action, in which each one of us who is invited gains the mission of emancipating ourselves and helping in the emancipation of others, in search of building a society that is more just and egalitarian.

THE BANKING CONCEPTION OF EDUCATION AND ITS ANTITHESIS, THE LIBERATING PEDAGOGY

The work of educator Paulo Freire is composed, in part, of a strong criticism of the "banking" model of education, and, in another, of his pedagogical proposition, which would be the rupture with such a model, which sees education as a path of liberation and awareness of the subjects. We have the notion of banking education, which, as elaborated by Paulo Freire, constitutes a critical and in-depth analysis of traditional pedagogical devices, widely and strongly disseminated in educational circles.

For the author, "banking" education would be a model based on the transmission of knowledge by those who know to those who know nothing, that is, it understands the teacher as the holder of knowledge and the students as empty bodies and minds that need to be endowed with such knowledge, that is, those who know are the active subjects of the educational process, while those who are in the position of not knowing behave in a passive and receptive way to the content to be transmitted.

In this pedagogical model, in the view of Professor Paulo Freire, the maintenance of the social structures of power on which our society is founded is perceived, in such a way that oppression, a direct result of this structural imbalance of power, is perpetuated, thus denying students the possibility of developing their critical and creative capacities in a full way. Freire thus establishes that such an order is unjust in perpetuating such human violations by distorting what for him would be the natural vocation of the human being, that is, the ontological vocation of "being more".

Freire (2016, p. 62) establishes that "humanization and dehumanization, within history, in a real, concrete, objective context, are possibilities of men as inconclusive beings and aware of their inconclusion". In Freire's view, the process of dehumanization is historical, as well as the oppression, exploitation and violence to which the oppressed are subjected by their oppressors.

In order for this paradigm to be overcome, Paulo Freire points out that the oppressed need to fight for the emancipation, both of the oppressed and the oppressor, enabling the restoration of the humanity of both, understanding that "therein lies the great humanist and historical task of the oppressed - to liberate themselves and the oppressors." (Freire, 2016, p. 63).

For Freire, oppressed and oppressors need to develop a critical awareness of reality. Such a process, in his view, results from action and reflection, that is, from praxis,

which makes it possible to understand the situation in which the oppressed find themselves, recognizing themselves as an active subject in favor of social transformation. For Freire, this awareness is fundamental for the liberation and humanization of the subjects.

Praxis, however, is reflection and action of men on the world to transform it. Without it, it is impossible to overcome the oppressor-oppressed contradiction. In this way, this overcoming requires the critical insertion of the oppressed in the oppressive reality, with which, objectifying it, they simultaneously act on it. (Freire, 2016, p. 75)

As Freire postulates, the banking conception of education has as its fundamental characteristic the narration and the dissertation of contents, and the teacher is responsible for transferring these to the students.

Narration of contents that, for this very reason, tend to petrify or to become something almost dead, whether they are values or concrete dimensions of reality. Narration or dissertation that implies a subject - the narrator - and patient, listening objects - the students. (Freire, 2016, p. 103)

According to the author, "banking" education disregards the existential experience of students and transforms education into a mechanical process of memorization, so that "one of the characteristics of this dissertation education is the 'sonority', the sterility, of the word and not its transforming force." (Freire, 2016, p. 104).

The narration, of which the educator is the subject, leads the students to the mechanical memorization of the narrated content. Moreover, the narration transforms them into "vessels", into containers to be "filled" by the educator. The more he "fills" the containers with his "deposits", the better educator he will be. The more they allow themselves to be meekly "filled", the better learners they will be. In this way, education becomes an act of depositing, in which the students are the depositories and the educator, the depositor. (Freire, 2016, p. 104)

Freire (2016, p. 105) postulates that in the midst of banking education there is a double annulment, that is, both educators and students cancel each other out, due to the distortions that come with this model, because in this conception of education there is no creativity, there is no transformation, there is no knowledge.

In the "banking" view of education, "knowledge" is a donation from those who think they are wise to those who think they know nothing. A gift that is based on one of the instrumental manifestations of the ideology of oppression - the absolutization of ignorance, which constitutes what we call the alienation of ignorance, according to which it is always found in the other. (Freire, 2016, p. 105)

For Freire (2016, p. 100) there is no other path than that of a humanizing pedagogy, which ends the broad process of maintaining oppression, that is, the perpetuation of the *status quo*, so that a permanent dialogical relationship is established.

In opposition to the banking conception, Freire proposes an educational practice that aims at the liberation of individuals, an education that is carried out through awareness and transformative action. This model proposed by Freire is based on dialogue, the problematization of reality and the development of critical thinking.

In this perspective, educators and students become critical investigators who, together, seek to overcome the "doxa" (opinion) by the "logos" (true knowledge). Through dialogue, students feel called to respond to the challenges of reality, understanding them in their connections and totality, in which both educators and students learn mutually in communion.

What seems indisputable to us is that, if we want the liberation of men, we cannot begin by alienating them or keeping them alienated. Authentic liberation, which is humanization in process, is not something that is deposited in men. It is not one more, hollow, mythologizing word. It is praxis, which implies the action and reflection of men on the world in order to transform it. (Freire, 2016, p. 118)

For these reasons, for Freire (2016, p. 119) education that is intended to be liberating, problematizing, cannot use this model based on narration, having the deposit of content as its purpose and conceiving students as mere patients. On the contrary, education needs to be a knowing act. "In this way, the educator is no longer the one who only educates, but the one who, while educating, is educated, in dialogue with the learner who, when educated, also educates." (Freire, 2016, p. 120).

Freire argues that oppressive action is, by nature, antidialogical, as it denies the oppressed the possibility of exercising praxis, reducing them to mere executors of the will of the oppressors. This denial manifests itself in the way oppressors relate to the oppressed, seeking to conquer them and keep them subjugated and in this process the role of oppressor is often played without awareness, that is, the agent of oppression, the teacher, does not perceive himself or recognize himself as such.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

In this article, we explore Jacques Rancière and Paulo Freire's scathing critiques of traditional models of education, as well as analyze their proposals for an emancipatory pedagogical practice. Both authors, starting from different perspectives, converge on a

crucial point: the rejection of a vision of education that perpetuates inequality and oppression, proposing, instead, approaches that value everyone's ability to learn, think critically and transform reality.

Rancière, in his analysis, deconstructs the idea that knowledge is a privilege of the few, challenging the belief in the hierarchy of intelligences. He criticizes the "old" educational system, which is based on the explanation and transmission of content, creating a dependence of the student on the teacher. For Rancière, explanation is not a path to learning, but rather an obstacle that prevents the development of the ability to learn by oneself. The author demonstrates, through the experience of Joseph Jacotot, that an "ignorant" person can teach another "ignorant" one, as long as the equality of intelligences is recognized and the will to learn is stimulated. The will, for Rancière, is the engine of intelligence, the force that drives the search for knowledge. He also emphasizes the importance of communication as a means by which intelligences connect and stimulate each other, not through a pre-established agreement, but through the mutual desire to make themselves understood. Veracity, for Rancière, is essential in the process of emancipation, implying the recognition of each individual as a thinking being capable of seeking the truth for himself.

Paulo Freire, in turn, criticizes "banking" education, a model in which the teacher "deposits" knowledge in passive students, who are seen as "vessels" to be filled. This approach, according to Freire, perpetuates oppression, by denying students the possibility of developing their critical and creative capacities. Banking education is characterized by the narration and dissertation of contents, disregarding the students' experience and transforming education into an act of mechanical memorization. Freire proposes a liberating pedagogy, which is based on dialogue, the problematization of reality and the development of critical thinking. For him, emancipation requires a critical awareness of reality, achieved through reflection and action (praxis). Freire argues that oppressive action is anti-dialogical, denying praxis to the oppressed and reducing them to mere executors.

Both authors recognize that the power structures present in society are reflected in education, perpetuating inequalities and limiting the potential of individuals. However, they also point to the possibility of transformation through pedagogical practices that stimulate autonomy, reflection and action.

Rancière encourages us to believe in the equality of intelligences and to challenge the need for explanation as a precondition for learning. His vision emphasizes the

importance of will, communication, and the search for truth as central elements in the process of emancipation.

Freire invites us to go beyond banking education, seeking a pedagogical practice that stimulates dialogue, problematization and transformative action. His liberating pedagogy emphasizes the need to develop a critical awareness of reality as a path to emancipation and humanization.

The articulation of Rancière's and Freire's ideas offers a rich and multifaceted perspective on education and emancipation. While Rancière focuses on the individual ability to learn for oneself, starting from the equality of intelligences and willpower, Freire highlights the importance of dialogue, awareness, and collective action in the search for liberation. Both, however, agree that education should not be a mechanism for the reproduction of power structures, but rather an instrument for social and individual transformation.

Emancipation, therefore, is not a process that occurs only in the classroom, but rather a continuous path of search for truth, critical reflection and transformative action in reality. Each individual, according to Rancière and Freire, has the ability to emancipate himself and to assist in the emancipation of the other, thus building a more just and egalitarian society.

Ultimately, this document seeks to inspire a reflection on pedagogical practice and encourage the search for approaches that value autonomy, creativity, and everyone's ability to learn and transform the world. Rancière and Freire's vision invites us to break with traditional models of education, building a path to intellectual and social emancipation, which requires the courage to challenge established power structures and to believe in the transformative capacity of each individual.

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