
RECONSIDERING EMANCIPATORY EDUCATION:
STAGING A CONVERSATION BETWEEN
PAULO FREIRE AND JACQUES RANCIÈRE

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ABSTRACT. In this essay Sarah Galloway considers emancipation as a purpose for education through examining the theories of Paulo Freire and Jacques Rancière. Both theorists are concerned with the prospect of distinguishing between education that might socialize people into what is taken to be an inherently oppressive society and education with emancipation as its purpose. Galloway reconstructs the theories in parallel, examining the assumptions made, the processes of oppression described, and the movements to emancipation depicted. In so doing, she argues that the two theorists hold a common model for theorizing oppression and emancipation as educational processes, distinguished by the differing assumptions they each make about humanity, but that their theories ultimately have opposing implications for educational practices. Galloway further maintains that Freire and Rancière raise similar educational problems and concerns, both theorizing that the character of the relations among teachers, students, and educational materials is crucial to an emancipatory education. Galloway's approach allows discussion of some of the criticisms that have been raised historically about Freire's theory and how these might be addressed to some degree by Rancière's work. Taking the two theories together, she argues that the possibility for an emancipatory education cannot be ignored if education is to be considered as more than merely a process of passing down the skills and knowledge necessary in order to socialize people into current society.

INTRODUCTION

In this essay I consider the work of two theorists who have explored the possibility of emancipation as a purpose for education: Paulo Freire and Jacques Rancière. Both theorists are concerned with the prospect of distinguishing between education that might socialize people into what is taken to be an inherently oppressive society and education that takes up emancipation as its purpose. In this regard, Freire described oppression as the societal enactment of "banking education" and developed an emancipatory "problem posing" education in the form of conscientization projects linked to the possibility of social transformation. By contrast, Rancière describes oppression as a pedagogization of the social order, referring to it as an intellectual "stultification," whereas he defines emancipation as a movement toward individual intellectual freedom.

Freire and Rancière each outline their theories of emancipatory education in a single, fairly brief volume. In the case of Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* comprises the bulk of his theoretical work and forms the basis of my analysis of his position in this essay.¹ Concise but varied, this book encapsulates the theory and ideas that inform much of his later writing concerned with educational practices

1. Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Harmondsworth, United Kingdom: Penguin, 1972). This work will be cited in the text as *PO* for all subsequent references.

and judgments.² First published in English in 1970, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* is still very influential forty years later, particularly among practitioners in the field of adult education. Though Rancière's *The Ignorant Schoolmaster* has been in print since 1991, interest in the contribution it might make to education is much more recent.³ The focus of this attention has been on Rancière's description of emancipatory education, which, according to Gert Biesta, challenges the model that is commonly advocated by critical educators.⁴ According to this model, the aim of education is to expose the workings of power because explaining how the world really operates leads to emancipation. Biesta argues that this is in keeping with a strand in the critical tradition where emancipation is understood to be brought about from the outside and where the task of critical social science is to make visible that which is hidden from everyday view. The problem with such an approach, he contends, is that it creates a dependency between emancipators and emancipated.

In this essay I argue that *both* Freire and Rancière challenge this conception of critical education and, moreover, that both theorists are concerned with similar questions, though their respective approaches raise contrasting problems and issues with oppositional implications for educational practices. This is not just an interesting aside. The discussion between the two theories that I present here brings to the foreground the question of the possibility of an emancipatory education and stimulates an important and as yet unresolved conversation that, in its broadest terms, calls into question the purpose of education itself.⁵

2. See, for example, Paulo Freire, *Education for Critical Consciousness* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1974); Paulo Freire and Donaldo Macedo, *Literacy: Reading the Word and Reading the World* (South Hadley, Massachusetts: Bergin and Garvey, 1987); and Paulo Freire and Ira Shor, *A Pedagogy for Liberation: Dialogues on Transforming Education* (Basingstoke, United Kingdom: Macmillan, 1987).

3. Jacques Rancière, *The Ignorant Schoolmaster: Five Lessons in Intellectual Emancipation* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1991). This work will be cited in the text as *IS* for all subsequent references. For scholarship on Rancière's work, see, for example, Charles Bingham and Gert J.J. Biesta, eds., with Jacques Rancière, *Jacques Rancière: Education, Truth, Emancipation* (London and New York: Continuum, 2010); Joseph J. Tanke, "Why Rancière Now?" *Journal of Aesthetic Education* 44, no. 2 (2010): 1–10; and Caroline Pelletier, "Emancipation, Equality and Education: Rancière's Critique of Bourdieu and the Question of Performativity," *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education* 30, no. 2 (2009): 137–150.

4. Gert Biesta, "Toward a New 'Logic' of Emancipation: Foucault and Rancière," in *Philosophy of Education 2008*, ed. Ronald David Glass (Urbana, Illinois: Philosophy of Education Society, 2009); Gert J.J. Biesta, "A New Logic of Emancipation: The Methodology of Jacques Rancière," *Educational Theory* 60, no. 1 (2010): 39–59, <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1741-5446.2009.00345.x/full>; and Bingham and Biesta, *Jacques Rancière*, 25–48, 32–33, and 38–40.

5. To date there has been no direct comparison made between the theories of Paulo Freire and Jacques Rancière, though Tyson Lewis does use Rancière to discuss Freire in the context of the aesthetics of teaching and Bingham scrutinizes Rancière's methodology in relation to Freire as well as the figure of

In the process of reconstructing the two theories, I argue that each is concerned centrally with how to distinguish between education that socializes people into what is considered to be an intrinsically oppressive society and education with the purpose of creating possibilities for opposition to or freedom from society as it stands.⁶ Both Freire and Rancière assume that education is not neutral and is oppressive by default, but they also contend that education can encourage possibilities for emancipation. Crucially, both describe how education for emancipation is *not* reliant upon teachers delivering more correct knowledge to students about the nature of their oppression, arguing instead that such educational practices actually replicate societal oppression. Rather, they each place importance upon the character of the *relations* between students and teachers *and* the relation between these people and the educational materials that they use (though in the case of Freire, the content of such materials is also significant). For both, emancipatory education cannot be systematized or implemented by government policy, but instead requires that people trust one other. Though they offer different conceptualizations of emancipation, both Freire and Rancière describe its pursuit as a risky undertaking that people try to avoid, encouraging a tendency for people to replicate oppression themselves.

I also describe how the differing assumptions that underpin the two theories point toward educational practices that might raise the possibility for emancipation. Each theory implies that an emancipatory education requires particular kinds of relations between students and teachers as well as specific purposes for the use of educational materials. But these implied practices are not the same, with the educational activity suggested by Freire contradicting that suggested by Rancière. So, while both theories argue strongly for the possibility of an emancipatory education, there is no single conclusion as to what an emancipatory education might consist of in practice.

Both Freire and Rancière describe oppression and emancipation as educational endeavors. In making this case, they each present assumptions about humanity and use these to produce a definition of equality. This then allows oppression to be described in terms of educational activity that would deny or undermine equality, with the corollary that emancipation might result from educational alternatives that re-instigate it. To demonstrate this shared model of theorizing about emancipation, in this essay I reconstruct the theories in parallel and in three stages: examining the assumptions made, the processes of oppression, and the

the child in Freire's pedagogy. See Tyson Lewis, "Education in the Realm of the Senses: Understanding Paulo Freire's Aesthetic Unconscious through Jacques Rancière," *Journal of Philosophy of Education* 43, no. 2 (2009): 285–299; Tyson Lewis, "Paulo Freire's Last Laugh: Rethinking Critical Pedagogy's Funny Bone through Jacques Rancière," *Educational Philosophy and Theory* 42, no. 5–6 (2010): 635–647; and Charles Bingham, "Under the Name of Method: On Jacques Rancière's Presumptive Tautology," *Journal of Philosophy of Education* 4, no. 3 (2009): 405–420.

6. For background regarding the question of the purpose of including education for socialization and education for subjectification, see Gert Biesta, "Good Education in an Age of Measurement: On the Need to Reconnect with the Question of Purpose in Education," *Educational Assessment, Evaluation and Accountability* 21, no. 1 (2008): 33–46.

movements to emancipation. Taking the two theories together in this way allows me to consider how the assumptions that we make about people might influence how we understand and practice education. It also allows me to demonstrate some of the criticisms that have been raised historically about Freire's theory and how these might be addressed to some degree by Rancière. However, I also question the necessity for theories of emancipatory education to follow the model of theorizing that Freire and Rancière demonstrate. Here I argue that the discussion must continue if educators are to take responsibility for the purpose of education and if education itself is to be understood as something more than the teaching of the skills and knowledge required for participation in society as it stands.

ASSUMPTIONS: INNATE CHARACTERISTICS OR EVERYDAY OPINIONS

Both Freire and Rancière set out assumptions that are used first to define equality and then to describe oppression and emancipation. Freire asserted that all people are conscious beings who are equally predisposed to reflect and act upon the world around them. Such social activity is assumed to be integral to the innate character of humanity, and if it is suppressed or prevented, then social inequality results. Rancière's definition of equality is described in terms of the *opinion* that all people are equally capable of directing their intellect toward forming their *own opinions*. This means that if the intellectual activity that is necessary in order to form opinions is suppressed or undermined, then inequality is replicated in society. Each theorist elaborates a complicated theory of emancipatory education from these brief definitions of equality, which I set out to reconstruct in this essay.

Freire assumed that people are conscious beings that have evolved from and are part of an ever-changing natural world. Humans inhabit an intersubjective "world" where they are aware of themselves and each other as well as external reality (*PO*, 54–55) within the context of ceaseless change. As historical beings, people are aware of a past, present, and future, and this awareness allows them to separate themselves from the consequences of their actions, encouraging them to believe that reality can be transformed through conscious activity. There is no need for people to resign themselves to the physical and social world as it is because they can make conscious plans to take action that might change it. This drive for transformation and inquiry informs Freire's conceptualization of education as the enactment of humanity's conscious and eternal striving toward completeness in the context of an ever-changing social and physical world (*PO*, 56–57).

Freire drew upon a Marxian notion of praxis, which is presented as integral to humanity's innate way of being (*PO*, 70–72 and 96), described as a social relation between people and the social and physical world where they simultaneously and consciously reflect and act upon that world. Praxis must involve both action and reflection; it is a dialectical relation where action should lead to critical reflection and where this reflection, if "true," will lead to action (*PO*, 27–28, 40–41, and 96). For Freire, the reflection that is integral to praxis is reliant upon dialogue among human subjects while they consider the concrete situations that

affect them. Here Martin Buber's dialogical humanism informs Freire's notion that dialogue might offer release from dominating relations, transforming subject-object relations among people into relations of co-subjects (*PO*, 135). This allows Freire to open the possibility for emancipatory relations among people, where love, trust, and hope are integral to praxis.

Freire elaborated on the nature of humans as transformative and reflective actors, drawing upon Karl Marx's early writings on alienation (the 1844 manuscripts) and those of Álvaro Vieira Pinto on the relation between humans and the physical and social situations that limit their potential to act (these are described as "limit situations").⁷ In an oppressive society limit situations may be the consequence of domination, and once they are perceived, humans can respond to the challenges they pose by planning and acting against them by means of "limit acts," for there is no need to accept the world as it is (*PO*, 70–72). The possibility of dealing with limit situations is the driver behind people's ability to have hope and confidence for the future. The ensuing transformation of situations and circumstances creates new situations and new limitations, in turn invoking new limit acts.

The transformative actions of humanity as a never-ending praxis represents people's permanent educational engagement with the physical and social world, driven by the limit situations they perceive around them. Freire conceptualized emancipatory education as educational activity that encourages and sustains praxis. This demarcates Freire from a prevalent tradition in Western society, associated with the Enlightenment, where the purpose of education is to create rational and autonomous individuals who can think and act independently.⁸ Significantly, the emphasis Freire placed on dialogue in the context of praxis describes an education that is inherently social and that might orient us toward wider goals of social justice. For Freire, the social character of emancipatory education makes individual emancipation as impossible as being the midwife at one's own birth (*PO*, 25).⁹

Freire defined oppression as a process of dehumanization that occurs when people's natural ways of being in praxis are disrupted or suppressed. The concept of praxis that Freire described might suggest human subjects in constant flux, immersed in ever-changing relations with the social and physical environment. However, praxis as a description of the innate character of humanity is itself a static notion, which in turn fixes Freire's definition of oppression. This makes the

7. Karl Marx, *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*, ed. Dirk J. Struik (New York: International Publishers, 1964); and Álvaro Vieira Pinto, *Sete lições sobre educação de adultos* [Seven lessons on adult education] (São Paulo: Cortez, 1982).

8. See Gert J.J. Biesta, *Beyond Learning: Democratic Education for a Human Future* (Boulder, Colorado: Paradigm, 2006).

9. Freire restated this argument in his dialogue with Ira Shor on "empowerment as a social act," in Ira Shor, "What Is Critical Literacy?" *Journal for Pedagogy, Pluralism and Practice* 4, no. 1 (1999), <http://www.lesley.edu/journals/jppp/4/shor.html>.

definition of oppression totally reliant on the adequacy of the assumptions already made about the character of humanity, and Freire's theory has been criticized specifically on this point (for example, through arguments that the theory does not fully encompass gender).¹⁰ Such criticisms represent a wider concern that theories of education based upon assumptions about human nature are both impossible and undesirable, with potentially dangerous consequences.¹¹

Rancière draws our attention to questions about truth and knowledge through a wide body of theory concerned with emancipation that does not rely upon truth assumptions about the nature of people.¹² In *The Ignorant Schoolmaster* the discussion is informed by "opinions," taking the description of oppression and the movement toward educational emancipation in a different direction. In Rancière's writings, opinions are not presented as an account of the innate character of human beings or even as the result of organized empirical research. Opinions are just opinions. But the opinions that Rancière raises inform understandings about how opinions arise in the first place as well as conceptualizations of both equality and oppression. So the use of opinions is in keeping with the arguments that the theory makes to describe possibilities for an emancipatory education.

Rancière has produced a body of work that explores emancipation as the enactment of the supposition of equality among all people.¹³ In keeping with this, *The Ignorant Schoolmaster* explores this notion of emancipation in the context of education commencing with the opinion that *all people have equal intelligence*, and Rancière's writing can be read as an example of what can be achieved under this supposition of equality. It is elaborated through the story of an educator, a teacher named Joseph Jacotot. Jacotot discovers emancipatory education by accident from observations made when he was teaching a language he did not know. He gave the students a bilingual text and left them to figure it all out for themselves, which they did, setting the scene for *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*.

Rancière observes that people will achieve different outcomes and degrees of success when they work on an identical task, suggesting that all people are *not* equal. If people *are* equal in their intelligence, how does this account for evidence that suggests the contrary? As a consequence of anecdotal observations, a second

10. See, for example, Nelly P. Stromquist, *Literacy for Citizenship: Gender and Grassroots Dynamics in Brazil* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997); Kathleen Weiler, "Freire and a Feminist Pedagogy of Difference," in *Politics of Liberation: Paths from Freire*, ed. Peter McLaren and Colin Lankshear (London and New York: Routledge, 1994); Carmen Luke, "Feminist Politics and Radical Pedagogy," in *Feminisms and Critical Pedagogy*, ed. Carmen Luke and Jennifer Gore (New York: Routledge, 1992); and Patti Lather, "Critical Pedagogy and Its Complicities: A Praxis of Stuck Places," *Educational Theory* 48, no. 4 (1998): 487–497, <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1741-5446.1998.00487.x/full>.

11. Biesta, *Beyond Learning*, 5.

12. See Biesta, "Toward a New 'Logic' of Emancipation," 46–47.

13. For example, Jacques Rancière, *On the Shores of Politics*, trans. Liz Heron (London: Verso, 1995), 45–52 and 63–92; or for a summary of Rancière's conceptualization, see Biesta, "Toward a New 'Logic' of Emancipation," 46–56.

opinion is introduced that “*man is a will served by an intelligence*” (IS, 51–52).¹⁴ The performance of intelligence, or equality, relies on an act of the will. Those who do not attend to their will are enacting a form of intellectual weakening, creating diversity of achievement in specific situations. Equality among people is reliant upon individuals attending to their will while acting under the assumption that everyone has equal intelligence. If people rely on the intellect of others, accepting others’ opinions and neglecting to form their own, they fail to attend to their own will and equality is no longer enacted. The consequence of this argument is that reliance on a group will undermines equality, making all societal institutions enactors of inequality and inherently oppressive. From here, Jacotot’s initial opinions produce a third opinion: “*it is precisely because each man is free that a union of men is not*” (IS, 78).

So far I have described the assumptions Freire and Rancière make in their respective theorizing about oppressive and emancipatory education. For Freire, the assumptions encompass a description of the innate character of humanity, where people are taken to be conscious and historical beings living in praxis. By contrast, in *The Ignorant Schoolmaster* Rancière avoids the making of truth assumptions about humans and instead constructs his theory as an enactment of the opinion that all intelligences are equal. I shall now describe the educational processes of oppression that each theory constructs on the basis of these assumptions.

PROCESSES OF OPPRESSION: BANKING EDUCATION OR STULTIFICATION

In this section I examine how both theorists describe oppression as an educational process of knowledge transmission that is enacted and replicated throughout society and its institutions, not just in schools or colleges. In addition, I explore how both understood oppression as the dichotomizing of those human attributes that are necessary to equality. According to Freire, oppression is the dichotomizing of people from the world — that is, the separation of reflection from action. This is the breaking down of humanity’s innate ways of being in praxis and results from human activity that blocks dialogue among people. Rancière describes oppression as a dichotomy of intelligence, one that divides people into a world of ignorant minds and knowing minds, that is enacted through the educational process of explication (that is, explanation). Both theorists describe oppression as an educational process that is enacted and replicated throughout society.

Freire drew upon G.W.F. Hegel in describing a class-driven oppression where dehumanization is a fundamental attribute of society (PO, 21–26). Oppressor and oppressed classes are locked into a codependent struggle for recognition that will only be resolved when the dehumanizers are defeated. But it is not people’s *destiny* to be oppressed; rather, it is their *vocation* to become human and this struggle can only be led by the oppressed who will free their oppressors as well as themselves.

14. The English translations of both Freire and Rancière cited here use the terms “man” and “men” to refer to all people. I do not address gender in this essay, and I have no wish to amend this language on behalf of the writers and in so doing conceal it from the reader. I prefer to draw your attention to it by retaining it in the text for your own consideration.

Opressors make oppressed people dependent upon them for knowledge about the world, but they themselves are dependent upon the oppressed for the possibility of a future social emancipation. Here Freire made clear that this project need not be left to chance, for humanizing education can play a role in this process.

The separation of humanity from the physical and social world is enacted by an oppressor class that acts as though other people are mere objects rather than fellow humans. They render everyone inanimate in an all-encompassing act of dehumanization that, drawing on Erich Fromm, Freire equated directly to sadism, violence, and a love of death (*PO*, 40 and 50–51). For the oppressors, “*to be is to have* and to be of the ‘having’ class” (*PO*, 35), so they live in a *world without people*. The oppressed, objects in the world of the oppressors, are *people without the world*. They are encouraged into passivity, disconnected from active engagement with the world because “as ‘things,’ [they] have no purposes except those their oppressors prescribe for them” (*PO*, 36).

For Freire, dialogue is integral to praxis to the extent that oppression is physically enacted through “antidialogical acts” that isolate people by interrupting the social reflection that must accompany all action. Antidialogical acts take the form of mythmaking, sloganeering, and cultural invasion that incites distrust among people and serves to keep them apart. This is enacted throughout society, including in organizations aimed at reducing inequality, such as the welfare system, development projects, and political parties. Freire described this replication of oppression as an educational process called *banking education*.

The banking education model describes a social world where oppressors, as teachers, assume the role of subject and act to make people (as students) objects by regulating and controlling the knowledge of the world that enters their consciousness. Students may not open their consciousnesses to the world as they intend, but must passively receive knowledge in the form of deposits that they simply file and store. The teacher teaches, knows, thinks, talks, chooses, acts, and decides. But students, as the objects of education, do the opposite of all of these things, making them dependent on the teacher for these actions. They are receptacles for knowledge about the world that they may collect, catalogue, and store, but not act upon, transform, or recreate. The teacher justifies this relation by presenting him- or herself as knowledgeable, encouraging students to accept themselves as ignorant (*PO*, 46–49).

Banking education controls people’s conscious engagement with the world, making them receptive to knowledge transmission from the “teacher” and less able to engage in dialogue with others. This socializes the banking-educated person into a world of objects; the oppressive society created by the oppressor class. They accept the status quo and believe that they cannot engage with the world other than through the teacher’s guidance. This false perception prevents them from objectifying the oppressor; indeed, they may admire oppressive people and harbor ambitions to be like them, as the peasant dreams of becoming a landowner. As banking education denies the ever-changing nature of people and the world they inhabit, oppression seems to be permanent with no prospect or

possibility for change. Though they know that they are oppressed, perception of their situation is impaired such that they may be unable to describe the reality of their own oppression. This controversial notion gives Freire's theory the difficult job of describing an emancipatory education that can overcome the false or naïve consciousness of "the oppressed" without resorting to educational liberators revealing the true world to "them" in an endeavor to emancipate from the outside, for this would only serve to continue banking education. For me, this is the task that Freire attempted, the question being how *successful* the theory is in dealing with the problem.

Rancière does not rely on notions of humanity as conscious beings and so offers a departure from the concept of a false consciousness.¹⁵ In common with Freire, Rancière sets up an educational model for the enactment of oppression in society that all social institutions replicate, not just schools or colleges, but takes schooling as a detailed example.¹⁶ Here, school children are encouraged to believe that they cannot understand without explanation (that is, explication), which makes them intellectually reliant on a teacher, in contrast to life before school, when children learn to speak, relate, and do with no explanation. This approach makes school a place where children grieve over the loss of their ability. The continual process of explication may be the result of a teacher's good intentions, but it also serves the purpose of allowing the teacher to reinforce his or her status as the knowledgeable one. The more the teacher explains, the more the child becomes dependent on explanation; it is a regression without end. The teacher may be well-meaning and conscientious, perhaps even arguing that "teaching was not about cramming students with knowledge and having them repeat it like parrots" (*IS*, 3). But unlike Freire, who viewed such techniques as aspects of a banking education, Rancière maintains that cramming is not the problem. The problem, according to him, is *explanation*, which assumes that children need help to *understand*.

For Rancière, the word *understanding* "throws a veil over everything" (*IS*, 6). The teacher obscures knowledge and then gradually unveils it, making teaching the art of continually gauging the distance between the taught material and the understanding of student. Using Freire's description of banking education, this process could be interpreted as the regulation and control of the knowledge that enters into a student's consciousness; an oppressive act of objectification. But Rancière makes no assumptions about human consciousness, constructing inequality as the oppressive educational process of explication that enforces the notion that the student has an inferior intelligence, encouraging the belief that some are more intelligent than others. The result is not "naïve consciousness," but rather a kind of intellectual laziness underwritten by the belief that all people vary in intellect (*IS*, 40). This weakens the attention people give to their own intellectual powers, replicating inequality.

15. See Biesta, "Toward a New 'Logic' of Emancipation," 51–52.

16. This is also discussed in some detail in Bingham and Biesta, eds., *Jacques Rancière*.

While Freire characterized the enactment of oppression as the dichotomizing of subject from object — that is, of people from the world — where the oppressed are made objects in a world without people, Rancière describes the dichotomizing of intelligence into “a world divided into knowing minds and ignorant ones, ripe minds and immature ones, the capable and the incapable, the intelligent and the stupid” (*IS*, 6). Explication is enacted and replicated in society as a whole, in what Rancière describes as a series of interlocking circles of inequality. For example, in relation to child development, professionals might perform tests on children’s brains, supposedly producing evidence of the difference in their intellectual capability (*IS*, 47), under the premise that it is natural for intelligences not to be equal. This supposed measurement of intelligence is actually an enactment of inequality because people cannot (and, in point of fact, have not) measured differences in intelligence. All they are doing is explaining *differences* by giving them the meaningless label of *intelligence* and using this to reinforce a circle of inequality where the oppressive opinion that *all people are unequal* is restated endlessly.

This process of reinforcing inequality through explication prevails throughout society, including in government, academia, and courts of law. A stultifying educational process is also enforced by those who aim to help the common people, including those (like Freire) with the goal of undermining the social order. Revolutionaries, progressives, supporters of meritocracy, and philanthropic rulers are bundled together by Rancière as people of good intention but with something else in common, too. They all transmit their ideas by means of an explicatory monitor system: an inverted tree of instruction from which their orders radiate outward. Their intention is to explain knowledge to people, be it political science, psychology, sociology, or journalism, believing that they are encouraging the possibility of liberty when actually they are extending the reach of inequality (*IS*, 17). Of course, more inequality means even more explanatory work for the revolutionaries and progressives to attend to! And so the cycle of inequality continues.

Rancière presents a very strong statement against the possibility for social science to contribute to the preservation of humanity. If humans are studied and explained like other animals under the auspices of natural science, then their continuance as a species need not be considered because the natural laws cannot raise such questions. Individuals can attend to the needs of existence only by using their will to guide their intelligence and so creating their own opinions. Rancière describes how social science uses the intellect of ordinary people while simultaneously functioning to suppress it. Systematized social science research enacts oppression by taking the opinions of ordinary people and then explicating these back to them as though they cannot understand them, telling people that “An *opinion* is a feeling we form about facts that are superficially observed. They are from weak and common minds and are the opposite of science which knows the true reasons for phenomena” (*IS*, 45).

Such explanations and explanatory theories not only encourage the oppressive opinion that people have unequal intelligence, they also undermine the

attention people might give to their intellectual powers, weakening the intellectual activity from which opinions originate in the first place, for "where need ceases, intelligence slumbers" (*IS*, 51). Here Rancière is clearly demarcated from Freire: oppressed people do not have a false consciousness and are not disconnected from the world; rather there is a weakening of the will, an intellectual laziness encouraged by the belief that some are more intelligent than others. The understandings of oppression and emancipation that Freire and Rancière describe have implications for the character of the emancipatory education they envision.

FREIRE'S EMANCIPATORY EDUCATION

In keeping with the notion of praxis, Freire presented emancipatory education as a practice as well as a theory, describing how an educational project might be conducted "on the ground." Emancipation must *not* involve the practice of educators explaining more correct knowledge of people's objective situation back to them as liberators coming from the outside because this replicates banking education. Here Freire developed Georg Lukács's notion of *critical intervention* as the unveiling of objective reality to "the masses" so that it departs from this model. Instead of knowledge transmission, it is the relation among educator, students, and the "world" that is of importance. The role of the teacher is to re-instigate dialogical and reflective practices, which, in turn, re-initiate praxis and link people back to the world (*PO*, 30). It is dialogue within the educational relation that drives the emancipatory process, while "the world" plays a mediating role (*PO*, 53). This raises questions about the status of *dialogue* and "the world" in the educational emancipatory process.

For Freire, dialogue is essential to the dialectic between reflection and action that constitutes praxis. This makes dialogue the driver in the trajectory to emancipation, but Freire introduced another dimension. A profound love for the world and for humanity is described as *prerequisite* to dialogue. Freire drew on Buber's work in developing the notion that those in dialogue may depart from relations of domination, opening up not just the possibility but the *necessity* for a nonoppressive relation between teachers and students. In banking education the relation between teacher and student is one of oppressor to oppressed. In emancipatory education, this opposition is expected to dissolve, transforming the student-teacher relation into one of love, where they work *with* each other, replacing the oppressive subject-object relation with one of *co-subjects*.

Such an equitable relation frames the liberatory educator as one who works *with* oppressed people rather than one who comes from the outside to liberate on their behalf. The existence of this relation is dependent on love and trust, which are essential to dialogue and to the initiation of a complex of dialectical relations between critical thinking and dialogue, dialogue and reflection, reflection and action, and "I and thou" without which the trajectory to emancipation will fail. Freire described the relation between dialogue and critical thinking as being like that between reflection and action, in that they define each other. Critical

thinking takes place if it generates dialogue; likewise, true dialogue generates critical thinking. Dialogue cannot exist without critical thinking,

which discerns an indivisible solidarity between the world and men, admitting of no dichotomy between them — thinking which perceives reality as process and transformation, rather than as a static entity — thinking which does not separate itself from action, but constantly immerses itself in temporality without fear of the risks involved. (*PO*, 64–65)

I make no attempt to explain what is meant here except to note that this is where Freire related the significance of “the world” in emancipatory education, for dialogue and critical thinking are activities that must take place while co-intending upon concrete situations arising from the physical and social world. Here, Freire not only trusted people’s relations with each other, but also their relation with the “world” and their ability to reveal the world to each other without the unveilings of an educator.

But for the oppressed, praxis is disrupted and there is a distorted perception of reality as it is. Freire argued that “the world” must therefore be re-presented in symbolic form as educational materials geared precisely toward the lives and experiences of the oppressed students. If the content is too obvious, then education can degenerate into propaganda, sloganeering, or knowledge deposits; conversely, if the content is too enigmatic, education can turn into a puzzle or guessing game where the educator takes the role of revealing the answer (*PO*, 86–87). Either way, these scenarios continue banking education because they block dialogue. To get around this problem, the “world” must be “codified” in a manner that encompasses the experiences and concerns of the students, so that it might instigate the dialogue that is integral to emancipation.

Here, Freire returned to the concept of people as historical beings, incorporating the historical philosophy of Hans Freyer, which assumes that human beings create not only material goods but also ideas, concepts, and social institutions while they simultaneously create history and become “historical-social beings.” It follows that the study of history or society can reveal ideas, values, concepts, and hopes as well as oppressive situations. These are the themes of the current epoch, and they both contain and are contained within limit situations from which the limit acts necessary to transform society may be detected (*PO*, 71–74). Given this foundation, Freire’s educational practice describes a complicated process of producing a “codified” world in the form of educational materials that encapsulate the reality of students’ lives (*PO*, 75). Educator and students will co-intend upon the “codified” world as if for the first time, investigating the themes through dialogue and enabling the identification of limit situations. Educators can then pose these situations back to students as problems for them to solve. In so doing, it is assumed that students can name the corresponding limit acts and start to plan transformative actions understood as a process of “conscientization” through dialogue that drives forward history.

Freire argued that the teacher works alongside and not above the oppressed in the process of creating the codified materials, but there does seem to be a privileged role for the educators here. For example, sociologists and psychologists

may be involved in validating that the materials are representative of students' lives (*PO*, 89). There are two issues here. First, it raises doubts regarding whether it is possible for an educator to maintain a co-subject relation when engaging in dialogue with students, a problem already much discussed by critics of Freire's tradition.¹⁷ Freire himself discussed the difficulty of the task in some detail (*PO*, 25, 50–59, and 66–68), implying that well-meaning educators cannot make easy assumptions that they themselves are not enactors of oppression. Second, even if the teacher-student relation *could* be a relation between co-subjects — that is, one in which the teacher does not play a dominant role — there might no longer be a clear demarcation between the student and teacher, bringing into question whether an emancipatory situation continues to be an educational one rather than, say, one where people work cooperatively together on shared projects. This undermines Freire's argument that praxis is an inherently educational process, the problem being that this might leave emancipation with no role in education. Biesta describes the possibility of this situation as one where "education dissolves into learning," where the teacher's role becomes that of a facilitator and the student's that of "learner."¹⁸ But these issues are circumvented by Rancière's theory of emancipatory education.

RANCIÈRE'S EMANCIPATORY EDUCATION

Freire's emancipatory trajectory from oppression is a humanizing process that centers on the reinstatement of people's innate character of being through praxis. Rancière's emancipation follows this model in that it is concerned with reinstating the opinions about humanity contained in the theory and with overcoming

17. See Henry A. Giroux, "Lessons to Be Learned From Paulo Freire as Education Is Being Taken Over by the Mega Rich," *Truthout* (November 2010), <http://www.zcommunications.org/lessons-to-be-learned-from-paulo-freire-as-education-is-being-taken-over-by-the-mega-rich-by-henry-a-giroux>. Giroux discusses how Freire's later writing acknowledges the complexity of relations between teachers and students. But the possibility of linking dialogue to a nondominating relation between teachers and students has been criticized more fundamentally by many scholars. See, for example, Diana Coben, "Paulo Freire's Legacy for Adults Learning Mathematics," in *Adults Learning Mathematics Conference* (4th, Limerick, Ireland [1997], <http://www.eric.ed.gov/ERICWebPortal/detail?accno=ED436428>); in discussing Freire's legacy for mathematics education, Coben argues that Freire had an inadequate concept of power and how it is reproduced. In a similar vein, Paul Taylor refers to Freire's simplistic understandings of society and the relations between individuals and the institutions within it; see Paul V. Taylor, *The Texts of Paulo Freire* (Milton Keynes, United Kingdom: Open University Press, 1993), 59. Ilan Gur-Ze'ev questions Freire's linkage of the idea of love as the essence of dialogue to the attainment of a positive utopia, speculating on the possibility of violent consequences; see Ilan Gur-Ze'ev, "Toward a Nonrepressive Critical Pedagogy," *Educational Theory* 48, no. 4 (1998): 463–486. Various writers from a feminist/poststructuralist perspective have posed criticisms along these lines as well; see, for example, Elizabeth Ellsworth, "Why Doesn't This Feel Empowering?" *Harvard Educational Review* 59, no. 3 (1989): 297–324; Luke, "Feminist Politics and Radical Pedagogy"; and Mimi Ormer, "Interrupting the Calls for Student Voice in 'Liberatory' Education: A Feminist Poststructural Perspective," in *Feminisms and Critical Pedagogy*, ed. Luke and Gore.

18. Gert J.J. Biesta, "Learner, Student, Speaker: Why It Matters How We Call Those We Teach," *Educational Philosophy and Theory* 60, no. 1 (2010): 544, <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1469-5812.2010.00684.x/full>. Paul Taylor also describes Freire's preference in his later work to refer to "cultural action" rather than "education," as found in the title of his Harvard papers, "Cultural Action for Freedom" (see Taylor, *The Texts of Paulo Freire*, 63).

knowledge transmission. However, Rancière's theory avoids the prospect of achieving a nondominating relation between teacher and student by suggesting that it is a relation of will against will that drives the emancipatory process. This means that the demarcation between student and teacher is maintained and remains recognizable as an educational relation. Similarly Rancière's teacher is relieved of any responsibility to select appropriate educational materials because the educational process is independent of knowledge content and any gauging of people's existing awareness of it.

Three opinions are enacted in the emancipatory process: that all intelligences are equal, that man is a will served by an intelligence, and that equality cannot be maintained in unions of men. This gives the liberatory educator two roles that are supported through the use of texts or visuals described as "the book" (*IS*, 13–14). First, in order to reinstate the equality of intelligence, the emancipatory schoolmaster must be *ignorant*. This does not refer to teaching without explanation, perhaps by teachers feigning ignorance through asking questions to which they already know the answer. Neither is it a case of someone judging another person to be ignorant and then putting that person into the role of teacher. Rancière describes knowledge transmission as the entwining of two relations between student and teacher: that of will to will and that of intelligence to intelligence.¹⁹ An ignorant schoolmaster is someone who teaches without transmitting knowledge, by dismantling the intelligence-to-intelligence relation that creates the deficit between his or her own intellect and that of the student. This requires the ignorant schoolmaster to enact the opinion that all people have equal intelligence. The teacher must demand that students pay attention to the power of their own intellect while acknowledging the intellect of others. The relation of will against will is strengthened in order to weaken the relation of intelligence to intelligence, where the will of the teacher drives the will of the student toward intellectual acts. This makes teaching for emancipation about verifying that students have paid attention; it yields a new educational relation, described as a circle of power of the wills, where "The master is he who encloses an intelligence in an arbitrary circle from which it can only break out by becoming necessary to itself" (*IS*, 15).

The consequence is that each student is propelled to follow their own circle of opinion forming and rely on their own will, in line with the third opinion that equality cannot be maintained in unions of people. While Freire's emancipation relies upon the maintenance of a co-subject relation between teacher and student, in Rancière's account it is the will of the educator that drives the emancipatory process, making Rancière's educational relation into one of domination: will against will. But this relation can only be emancipatory if it is conducted under the auspices of the equality of intelligence. In this way, Rancière's emancipatory process removes the split between inferior and superior intelligences, just as

19. Jacques Rancière, "On Ignorant Schoolmasters," in *Jacques Rancière: Education, Truth, Emancipation*, ed. Bingham and Biesta, 1–5.

Freire's conscientization undoes the dichotomy between people and the world. While Freire's theory raised questions about the status of dialogue and symbolic representations of "the world" in the emancipatory process, Rancière's theory raises questions about the status of the will and the status of the symbolic representations in "the book."

The will is driven by the belief that all intelligences are equal, for this is what drives the need to understand and to be understood. Here the notion of the will is directly equated to reason, just as intelligence is synonymous with equality (*IS*, 73). To believe in the equality of intelligence means assuming that all people are capable of understanding each others' thoughts, emotions, or opinions and to enact this belief requires tireless work (*IS*, 9–10 and 63–64). For example, a poet will expend enormous effort revising and correcting a poem because the poet works under the assumption that the readers will understand the results of this endeavor (*IS*, 68). Similarly, those who live within earshot of a musician will hear the same musical phrase repeated a thousand times. The argument is that if people are to enact their own intellectual power in the conduct of daily life, then this will require endlessly repetitive acts where everyday encounters are imitated, ordered, translated, reconsidered, and compared so that opinions might be created and communicated to others, under the assumption that they too have the intelligence to understand them (*IS*, 55). While for Freire such repetitive acts might be associated with banking education, Rancière sees the acts of imitating, translating, taking apart, and putting back together as enactments of equality, providing that they are undertaken in the belief that all others are equal in intelligence. Of course, this repetitive activity is relentlessly boring, making the demanding of equality an act of the will, with the emancipatory teacher taking on the role of demander (*IS*, 55–56). There is a role for reflection here, understood as unconditional attention to one's intellectual acts and the route that they follow (*IS*, 36–37), which contrasts with Freire's notion of reflection as a social contemplation of the social and physical world that cannot be separated from action.

What Rancière describes is a circular motion of emancipation, where the will is driven by the belief that all people have equal intelligence but where the enactment of this belief is driven by the will. The role of the teacher is to maintain and strengthen this motion. Rancière defines the guidance of intelligence by the will as *attention* (*IS*, 25); stated more precisely, the role of the emancipatory teacher is to verify that the student has indeed *attended* to his or her will while the student *simultaneously* acknowledges that all intelligences are equal. This is where symbolic representations of the "world" become integral to the emancipatory process. Freire relied on "codifications" that incorporate the concrete social and physical circumstances of students' lives so that they might become more fully conscious of these circumstances through the dialogue that reconnects them to the "world." But for Rancière, people do not need reconnecting to the world because they are connected already. "The book" is required to verify that students have paid attention and directed their intelligence; it is described as follows:

The thing in common, placed between two minds, is the gauge of that equality, and this in two ways. A material thing is first of all "the only bridge of communication between two

minds." The bridge is a passage, but it is also distance maintained. The materiality of the book keeps two minds at an equal distance, whereas explication is the annihilation of one mind by another. (*IS*, 32)

The student must engage with the text or picture (*IS*, 66), answering a three-part question: what do you see, what do you think about it, and what do you make of it? This allows the teacher to enforce the will of the student, encouraging the repetitive acts of translation, imitation, and so on that are necessary to forming opinions. The symbols are not veiled and then revealed incrementally through explanations, so students are no longer encouraged to believe that they understand less than the teacher or to say that they do not understand the material (*IS*, 10). The purpose of emancipatory education is not to reveal knowledge about the world, but to reveal intelligence to itself, so any text or representation can be used (*IS*, 27–28).

Emancipatory teachers do not verify that students have found or understood; rather, they verify that students have searched and assess whether or not they have paid attention. Rancière asserts that the ignorant can easily tell when someone does not know what they are talking about, provided they are emancipated themselves (*IS*, 26), allowing the possibility for anyone, regardless of formal education or level of knowledge awareness, to be an emancipatory teacher.

Though Rancière describes how any text can be used, to me the theory implies that the texts and symbols resulting from the work of the intellectually emancipated are not equivalent to the product of someone who is oppressed and stultified. The emancipated produce symbolic works that recognize the equality of all people (*IS*, 69–70). Such works need to be figured out, encouraging exercise of the will and intellectual powers. In contrast, the product of a stultified mind does not recognize the equality of intelligence in others. Such works explain and sloganize, requiring the reader to listen and follow commands, for it is assumed that they might not be able to understand. In this way, the oppressed become responsible for enacting oppression — this is reminiscent of Freire's description of oppressors' "verbalism" and sloganeering, exemplified by the activities of revolutionaries, which results from theorizing that is removed from practice. Rancière also relates how learned people find it hard to stop explicating, making their emancipatory teaching very reliant on "the book" to maintain intellectual equality between themselves and students. On the other hand, the ignorant and uneducated find it much easier to be ignorant teachers and have less need for "the book" for the purpose of preventing explication. In addition to being ignorant, however, a teacher must also emancipate by verifying that students have attended to their wills and the power of their own intellects (*IS*, 14–15). So, ignorant or learned, all teachers rely on "the book" for this purpose.

DEGREES OF EMANCIPATION

So far I have discussed how Freire and Rancière's descriptions of emancipation rely on the enactment of assumptions they have made about human equality, where the character of the relation between students and teachers drives an emancipatory process that is dependent upon symbolic representations such as texts or pictures. I shall also consider how both theories assume that people resist or avoid

emancipation; require that the teacher be emancipated; link emancipated human activity to the physical and social world; and finally, preclude the possibility for emancipatory education to be systematized within a formal education system.

Rancière describes how people tend to avoid having to deal with intellectual emancipation (*IS*, 16) and the change that it signifies. People will pretend that they cannot understand and will take on a public persona of humility, arguing that they are less intelligent than others when actually they are just frightened of the consequences of their intellectual freedom (*IS*, 40 and 57). Freire also discussed the “fear of freedom,” noting that it is easier to conform to the oppressive social order than to enter risky relations with potential comrades in emancipatory projects (*PO*, 23–24 and 99–100). Both theorists outline a tendency for the oppressed to become oppressors, with Rancière describing the successful student who learns his lesson so that he might “peer down on high from those he has surpassed” (*IS*, 22) in his role as lawyer, journalist, or academic. Meanwhile Freire described a culture where peasants strive to become landowners and where to be a “real man” is to be oppressive (*PO*, 22). Also, there is also a tendency toward “false generosity” (*PO*, 21 and 36), where oppressors give charitably only to satisfy their guilt while situating the poor as passive receivers. This wider discussion by Freire suggests degrees of oppression and emancipation and complicated relations within a class society that he discussed further in his later writings.²⁰ But in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, the distinction between the oppressed and the emancipated seems clear-cut. The teacher is unequivocally emancipated while “the oppressed” are presented as a distinct group; further, it seems that those reading the theory cannot be oppressed themselves. In contrast, Rancière presents fluctuating states of emancipation among different individuals at different times, where anyone in society, including the reader, can be oppressed, oppressor, emancipated, or emancipator. As with Freire, Rancière’s teacher must be emancipated; the difference is that this cannot be a fixed state, for if a static intellectual state were reached, then groups might come to hold to the same opinions and this would destroy intellectual freedom. This makes the emancipatory relation reliant on movement — that is, it derives from changes in the attention people give to their intellect where individual wills are in constant flux (*IS*, 78).

The notion of praxis links Freire’s theory to the social and physical world where there are endless possibilities for liberated people to think and act together to transform material reality. This also allows Freire to describe a material inequality, understood in the sharpest terms as the starvation and disease that results from economic poverty. Freire’s writing is in keeping with praxis as an attempt to theorize in response to such *practical* problems. Though Rancière’s emancipation refers to the intellectual freedom of individuals, there are social and political dimensions to it as well. Belief in intellectual equality must be

20. See, for example, Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of Hope* (New York: Continuum, 2004); or Peter Roberts, “Pedagogy, Neoliberalism and Postmodernity: Reflections on Freire’s Later Work,” *Educational Philosophy and Theory* 35, no. 4 (2003): 451–465.

made public for emancipation to be effected, so students must enact their belief in equality through speaking in some fashion (*IS*, 26).²¹ Also, a link to the material world must be sustained because people who are intellectually free develop opinions from their chance encounters in everyday life. While Rancière theorizes in response to a *theoretical* problem, constructing an immaterial inequality that originates with opinions that reinforce the *belief in inequality*,²² “individual emancipation carried to its logical extremes reconnects with shared concerns.”²³

Like Freire, Rancière conveys a sense of history and of society in constant change. Over time the number of people outside of the explicatory system has shrunk and humanity has been pedagogized, according to Rancière, who likens society to an enormous machine that promotes explanations (*IS*, 134). But while Freire pointed toward the prospect of an emancipated society, Rancière’s movement of emancipation offers no such possibility. Although there is a past and a present, there is no projection to the future. Still, while Rancière does not account for class oppression in the way that Freire did, the theory does not deny its existence and there is acknowledgement that the order of society does change (*IS*, 118) and, further, that one social order might be infinitely preferable to another.²⁴ In the end, Rancière’s theory acknowledges the existence of a “proletariat,” but it rejects the idea that a class-based *explanation* of oppression can offer emancipatory possibilities (*IS*, 137).²⁵

According to Rancière, emancipation is not an end state, for it can only be expressed in the present, enacted by individuals operating under the supposition that all intelligences are equal (*IS*, 46). Such expressions of equality can confront the logic of explication as it is enacted by society and effect political change, but the influence is sporadic.²⁶ Most of what would commonly be described as political activity produces change that extends and replicates the oppressive social order, including many actions of the groups that aspire to notions of solidarity.²⁷ But enactments of intellectual emancipation may effect a reconfiguration of the existing explanatory system so that it incorporates an inscription of equality. This political change may be fleeting and occurs only rarely. But Rancière does not downplay its significance, for “at the moment when society is threatened to be shattered by

21. See also Biesta, “Learner, Student, Speaker”; and Rancière, *On the Shores of Politics*, 51.

22. Perhaps this essay does something similar by considering only the theoretical aspect of Freire’s work.

23. Rancière, *On the Shores of Politics*, 51.

24. Bingham and Biesta, eds., *Jacques Rancière*, 37.

25. *Ibid.*, 32–38.

26. *Ibid.*, 37.

27. *Ibid.* Rancière describes the explicatory social order as the “police order,” and “politics” refers only to the emancipatory expressions that confront its logic. All other activity commonly considered to be political — for example, parliament, lobbying, industrial solidarity, or revolutionary organization — is considered to be “policing” rather than “politics.” On this point, see Bingham and Biesta, *Jacques Rancière*, 32–38; and Biesta, “Learner, Student, Speaker,” 546–547.

its own madness, reason performs a saving social action by exerting the totality of its own power, that of the recognised equality of intellectual beings" (IS, 97).

So, for opposing reasons, neither Freire's nor Rancière's emancipatory education can be systematized. Likewise, for both, emancipatory education is a never-ending process. For Freire, emancipatory education can only take place as discrete projects within an oppressive society, and systemization is only possible after a social revolution that results in the defeat of the oppressor class. Emancipatory education itself is a revolutionary project where educators are revolutionaries. For a revolution to be successful, praxis must be sustained as an educational process, and in this sense there is never an end point for an emancipatory education. With Rancière, social emancipation is impossible because the very existence of society and its institutions relies upon the union of intellects, making all societies inherently oppressive. But emancipatory education continues without cease, driven by individual wills that affect the social order in the manner of a fluctuating and sporadic flame that has not yet been extinguished.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Through reconstructing the two theories in parallel, I have shown that the assumptions Freire and Rancière make about human beings have consequences for how they each conceptualize oppression, emancipation, and associated educational practices. Freire described how all people are equally predisposed to live in praxis, which is characterized as a dynamic social relation between reflection and action that is understood as a truth assumption about the innate character of human beings. Rancière holds the opinion that all people have equal intelligence and that a person's intelligence is directed by their will. But an opinion is just an opinion. Unlike Freire, Rancière reminds us that the assumptions we make about people are just opinions, regardless of whether we are theorists, educators, or students, demonstrating the importance of people creating their own opinions and how these might connect with shared concerns. Taking the two theories together, we are encouraged to consider how the assumptions that we make about humanity, whether we consider them to be truths or matters of opinion, have repercussions for how we understand and practice education. Furthermore, we cannot assume that educational activity is neutral, for the repercussions may be oppressive.

I have shown how both Freire and Rancière adopt a similar model in order to conceptualize oppression and emancipation. They each take the assumptions that they make about people and use them to produce a definition of equality. Oppression is then defined as an educational activity that suppresses or disrupts the enactment of the assumptions that they have made about humanity. Freire and Rancière both conceptualize this process of oppression as a form of knowledge transmission that encourages students to be dependent upon teachers. For Freire, oppression is described by the banking education model, where teachers deposit knowledge, channeling it directly into students' consciousness. This activity blocks dialogue and in so doing disrupts praxis, enforcing a dichotomy between people and the world so that they cannot intend upon reality through their own

choices and decisions. The oppressed, as students, are no longer able to reflect and act together; instead, they are dependent on oppressors, as teachers, for their knowledge of the world. For Rancière, the transmission of knowledge from teacher to student is considered as the entwining of two relations, that of intelligence to intelligence and will to will. The intelligence to intelligence relation replicates inequality through acts of explication by the teacher that weaken the will of the student and the attention they pay to their own intellect. Here a dichotomy is created between ignorant and knowing minds. This encourages the belief that people have different intelligences, which both weakens individual wills and the activity by which opinions are formed, and also creates a dependency between oppressed and oppressor where students believe that they must rely on a teacher in order to understand.

For both theorists, the central concern of emancipatory education is to overcome knowledge transmission and the dependency that it creates between student and teacher that replicates inequality. According to Freire, this requires teachers to initiate dialogue in a relation of love that re-instigates praxis, so removing the dichotomy between people and the world. For Rancière, an emancipatory education must reinstate the equality of intelligence, where the will of the teacher demands students to direct their own intelligence while acknowledging the intelligence of others. Here the will-to-will relation is strengthened in order to drive the dismantling of the relation of intelligence to intelligence, removing the dichotomy between the ignorant and the knowing.

I have also demonstrated that these two understandings of emancipatory education have opposing consequences for educational practices. But for both Freire and Rancière emancipation is dependent on two central features: first, on the *character of the relation* between teachers and students and, second, on the necessity of a relation between these people and the educational materials that they use, such as texts or other artifacts. In the case of Freire, the teacher and students must be co-subjects, a relation of love in praxis. Here texts, pictures, and the like are used to prevent knowledge transmission by providing the means for the teacher and students to co-intend on these materials through the practices of dialogue and critical thinking that drive praxis. But these "codifications" must incorporate representations of the lives and concerns of students so that there is no need for a teacher to interpret them on the students' behalf and in so doing resort to banking education. In the case of Rancière, in contrast, emancipatory education demands an unequal relation between teachers and students, as it is the will of the teacher that drives the emancipatory movement toward equality of intelligence, insisting that students pay attention to their own intellect. To do this, the teacher uses what Rancière describes as "the book": a text or picture that mediates between the intelligence of the teacher and that of the student, preventing the teacher from explicating and discouraging the student from claiming that they do not understand. Here the purpose is not for teachers to reveal knowledge about the world, but to reveal intelligence to itself, so the content is irrelevant to emancipation and any text or picture could be used.

I have raised four aspects of Freire's theory that have been criticized historically and that Rancière's theory seems to avoid. First, there is the charge that Freire made truth assumptions about humanity in order to describe education and oppression, which has been criticized on the basis that making such truth claims is both impossible and undesirable. Rancière avoids this problem by presenting assumptions as just being opinions, where inequality is itself simply an opinion. Second, Freire relied upon a notion of oppression as naïve consciousness, a state in which people might not understand the reality of their own oppression and one that has the associated problem of how to overcome this without resorting to knowledge transmission. Rancière's theory does not rely on an understanding of humans as conscious beings and so avoids this difficulty. Third, Freire conceptualized the necessity of a relation where teachers and students act as co-subjects, which has been criticized on the basis of its impossibility; it has also been argued that if it *were* achieved, there might be no demarcation between teacher and student, perhaps leaving emancipation with no role in education. Again, Rancière avoids this, conceptualizing an emancipation that is reliant upon a relation of will against will between teacher and student, so preserving an educational relation. Finally, though Freire acknowledged the complexity of oppressive relations, some have argued that the theory struggles to adequately describe this complexity. In his work Rancière makes the very possibility of emancipation reliant upon fluctuating states of oppression and emancipation. Unlike Freire, Rancière does not aim for social emancipation that might overcome material inequality, such as starvation and preventable disease. On the other hand, the emancipation that Rancière *does* describe cannot be deferred to a postrevolutionary future that is forever over the horizon. Emancipation can only be enacted in the present.

But the aim of this essay is not to compare the efficacy of Rancière's theory over that of Freire. Rancière's theory is just an opinion, and as such it cannot be the last word on the subject of emancipatory education. For me, the importance of Rancière's theory is that it continues to take responsibility for the issues and concerns that Freire raised. In this essay I have argued that both Freire and Rancière are fundamentally concerned with the possibility of distinguishing between education that might socialize people into an inherently oppressive society and education that takes emancipation as its purpose and that might create viable alternatives. Their differing conceptualizations of oppression share the same core concerns: that the consequences of education are never neutral and that educational practices that are based upon knowledge transmission *cannot* be emancipatory. Both Freire and Rancière acknowledge this as particularly problematic given the proliferation of organizations — be they political parties, revolutionary organizations, charitable foundations, or universities — that aim to reduce societal inequality by passing down knowledge to people on the belief that, in doing so, they are working against oppression. In this sense, I would argue that they both question the educational practices associated with popular understandings among critical educators who act on the belief that revealing knowledge about how power operates might lead to emancipation.

In their conceptualizations of emancipatory education, both Freire and Rancière emphasize the processes by which knowledge is created, how these might connect with shared concerns, and the importance of all people engaging in such activity. Rancière takes this further than Freire by drawing our attention to the consequences of making truth assumptions about the nature of humanity. For me, taking the two theories together encourages the discussion of all the educational issues I have mentioned here and might even suggest further possibilities. Here I have argued that Rancière and Freire share a similar model in the construction of their theories, demarcated by the assumptions that they make about human beings. But need *any* assumptions be made about people to discuss the possibility of an emancipatory education?

A concern both theorists share is how understandings of emancipation that are reliant upon knowledge transmission create a hierarchical dependency between those who consider themselves to be emancipators (as teachers) and oppressed people (as students), where students must rely upon external judgments about whether their emancipation is necessary or in occurrence. Both Freire and Rancière set out to remove this dependency. With Freire, emancipation is natural and innate to humanity while, according to Rancière, Jacotot's emancipation is the oldest method practiced throughout history (*IS*, 16). For both, the opportunities to implement emancipatory practices successfully are undermined by oppressive processes in society; nonetheless, both speculate that emancipation takes place regardless of outside intervention. However, Freire also posited that emancipation need not be left totally to chance and that there is a role for education (*PO*, 48–49). Although Rancière is less emphatic on this point, his writing emphasizes the significance of *all* intellects, making the possibility of an emancipatory education into a question that, by definition, should not be ignored and that can only be addressed in the present.

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