The Possibility of Philosophy in Schools:
Jacques Rancière and Community of Philosophical Inquiry

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ABSTRACT

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Responding to growing efforts to bring philosophy into K-12 schools in the U.S., this dissertation takes up pedagogical and political concepts used by Jacques Rancière in order to reflect on the motivating principles and limitations of bringing philosophy to schools. Rancière critiques schooling as a mechanism by which socio-economic inequality is justified and argues that academic philosophy, following the rationalist tradition attributed to Plato, is in fact complicit in this justificatory process. Given his staunch position, it might seem that it is impossible to implement philosophy in schools using Rancièrian principles. I argue that there is a practice of philosophy in schools to which Rancière may be sympathetic on a theoretical level. In order to support my position, the principle aim of this work is to provide evidence that Rancière's works reflect specific critiques and alternative values of both schooling and philosophy that are also represented in the principled pedagogical practice of community of philosophical inquiry (CPI). I begin to think through the possibility of CPI in new and existing schools, as well the way that the notion of possibility itself figures into this line of inquiry. My thesis is that CPI is the philosophical practice most appropriate for schools given the critiques and alternative values of schooling and philosophy shared by Rancière and CPI, but that Rancière may help to inform the way the practice is implemented.

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I would like to acknowledge teachers I had before arriving at my doctoral program as well. I am forever grateful for the philosophical training I received at San Diego State University. As an undergraduate I had the fortune to be mentored by Dr. Steve Barbone, whose guidance, humility, skepticism, and humor continue to inform my aspirations. The

teacher who originally inspired me with a love of learning is Mrs. Lisa Lee, my fifth and sixth grade teacher at Lindbergh-Schweitzer Elementary School.

My family has supported me in so many ways throughout this journey. Offering countless hours of babysitting and accepted my absence at various gatherings so that I could focus on work and school, they held faith in my abilities and belief in my dreams, even during my struggles. I would not be where I am today without my patient and inspiring husband Scott Davis, who slowed making progress on his own goals so that I could pursue mine.

For my daughter,

Sky Sophia

PREFACE

There are a number of ways that I find Jacques Rancière to be a fascinating study for important questions and themes discussed in contemporary academic scholarship within philosophy of education, but I ascend to this level of scholarship by starting with a look at my high school experience. Although there may be limitations to substantiating one's research based on biographical facts, the messy narrative of my attendance in that first public high school – the same one from which I ended up graduating after attending two other schools in the interim, and the same school at which I first began to think critically about schooling – acts not only as a partial motivation for my project, but provides a relatable example that I will draw on occasionally throughout the dissertation. By inquiring into Rancière's work, I continue to discover avenues for inquiry that pertain not merely to my own experiences in schools, but also to topics I have become drawn to since entering college and throughout graduate school.

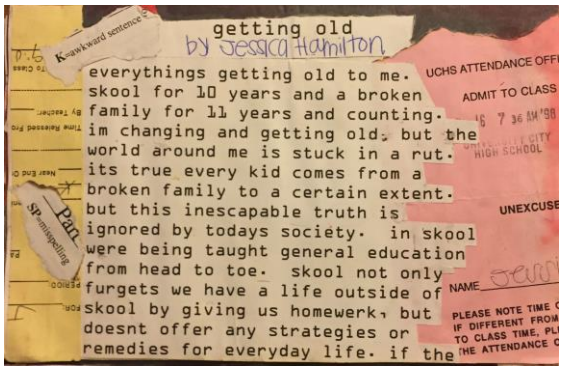
As a brief disclaimer about this tale of my teenage disappointment with school, I should say that to this day I am still not entirely sure whether or not I was justified in feeling disappointment in my school experience. After all, with the dramatic and emotional changes taking place at home, it may be that I was simply projecting my familial disappointments onto my educational experience. Maybe I should have become motivated to study different factors that had impacted my home life rather than ending with a motivation to make whole new schools based on philosophy. Maybe there is nothing that my school could have done. I could have done the right thing, continued as a high-

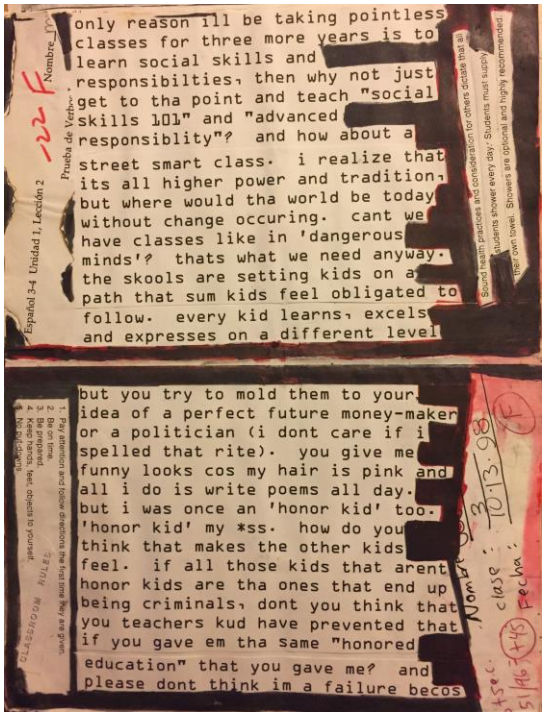
achieving student, and lived through the rocky time in my life without ever becoming disgruntled with schooling. But in fact, I blamed many things on the schools I attended, and this is the tale of how I did that, and how that blame has led to my current study.

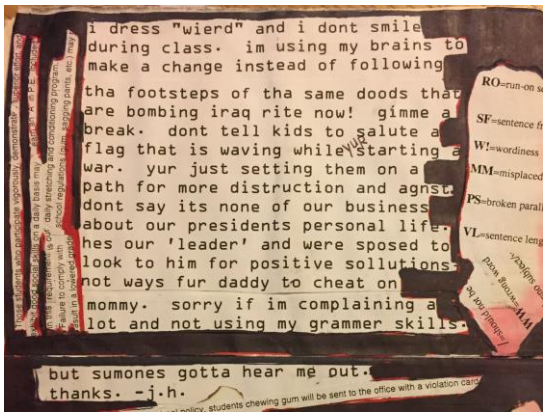
In Elementary School I was in Gifted and Talented Education classes starting in third grade and was in advanced classes in Middle School as well, excitedly doing homework each day after school, soaking up the subject matter. My parents had divorced when I was five, so my brother and I spent ten years switching each week between our parents' houses. Even though I did not have a perfectly stable life at home, I managed to consistently do well in school. This all changed in the summer before tenth grade, when my mother went through her second divorce and I moved in with her permanently. I became a fifteen-year-old who was skipping classes and drinking liquor with friends after school.

As a fifteen-year-old going through difficulties at home, I spent hours, including class time, creating a self-published magazine (or zine), which I titled *Wizdumb*. In this zine I published pieces that were critical of school and society. I had been inspired by zines I had seen at record stores and concert venues I frequented – all part of the Punk Rock community. I was able to print the first issue thanks to my English teacher who ran copies for me from the teacher's lounge. Other issues I was able to print at the local copy stores. While I did the designing and most of the content, I also accepted submissions from friends at my school. While some of my pieces were critical of home life and my parents, the central focus was on the failings of school. Again, one could say that I had misplaced the blame, and that school was not the problem. Underlying my criticisms of my school,

however, was the assumption that it could be something different, and that I was capable of something different; I had the sense that my potential was being thwarted, and that this was true for many other students. Having loved school for so many years and having felt at home there – inspired by teachers, excited about my abilities, curious – I now felt uncared for, as teachers seemed willing for me to fail out of their classes, never expecting more, never looking into the reasons for such failure. It remains a question for me as to whether I should have or could have had a stronger will and remained a successful student all those years, and whether schooling could have helped if my schools were different. The topic of the will is one that is still relevant to me to today, as is the question of the responsibility of the school, and these are topics that Rancière directly takes up.


getting old
by Jessica Hamilton
everythings getting old to me. skool for 10 years and a broken family for 11 years and counting. im changing and getting old, but the world around me is stuck in a rut. its true every kid comes from a broken family to a certain extent. but this inescapable truth is ignored by todays society. in skool were being taught general education from head to toe. skool not only furgets we have a life outside of skool by giving us homewerk, but doesnt offer any strategies or remedies for everyday life. if the


only reason ill be taking pointless classes for three more years is to learn social skills and responsibilties, then why not just get to tha point and teach "social skills 101" and "advanced responsiblity"? and how about a street smart class. i realize that its all higher power and tradition, but where would tha world be today without change occuring. cant we have classes like in 'dangerous minds'? thats what we need anyway. the skools are setting kids on a path that sum kids feel obligated to follow. every kid learns, excels and expresses on a different level
but you try to mold them to your idea of a perfect future money-maker or a politician (i dont care if i spelled that rite). you give me funny looks cos my hair is pink and all i do is write poems all day. but i was once an 'honor kid' too. 'honor kid' my *ss. how do you think that makes the other kids feel. if all those kids that arent honor kids are tha ones that end up being criminals, dont you think that you teachers kud have prevented that if you gave em tha same "honored education" that you gave me? and please dont think im a failure becos


i dress "wierd" and i dont smile during class. im using my brains to make a change instead of following tha footsteps of tha same doods that are bombing iraq rite now! gimme a break. dont tell kids to salute a flag that is waving while starting a war. yur just setting them on a path for more distruction and agnst. dont say its none of our business about our presidents personal life. hes our 'leader' and were sposed to look to him for positive sollutions not ways fur daddy to cheat on mommy. sorry if im complaining a lot and not using my grammer skills.
but sumones gotta hear me out.
thanks. -j.h.

After dropping out of my original high school at age fifteen, I was able to attend a charter high school where my mom had quite serendipitously found a temporary position as a secretary. It was a great two semesters of self-paced classes, where I read many important socially critical books at my own pace, working one-on-one with teachers. Although I had already heard of the word anarchism through punk rock bands I was listening to at the time, an English teacher at this charter school give me a flyer that detailed more about the theory. This would prove to have an impact on my development and is now a theory that I find interesting to consider in light of Rancière's works.

The two semesters I spent at that charter school were very positive but were followed by a move back to a new public high school when my mom and I moved in with a new boyfriend of hers on the other side of the city. I continued publishing my zine at this new school, where I once again felt jaded by schooling. After she and that boyfriend broke up, my mom and I moved back to our original neighborhood, I moved back into my original high school, and on the urgent printing of the fifth issue of my magazine, I graduated high school. To explain this urgent printing: because I received an F in my first-period Ceramics class my senior year, due to tardiness, a special deal had to be worked out between my Ceramics teacher and my counselor. The F was impacting my GPA such that I would not be able to graduate high school if I did not receive a passing grade in that first period class. My Ceramics teacher allowed me to create any work of art to supplement the ceramics instruction I had missed. I thus submitted a small zine on the topic of art and was given the passing grade I needed in order to graduate.

As should come as no surprise, college was not on my radar at the time I received my diploma. I did not plan to go to college, but evidenced by a number of drawings I had created, I wanted to one day open a very different kind of high school. I pictured an entirely self-sufficient school where students could run their own shops (bookstores, record stores, coffee shops, etc.), grow their own food, collect solar energy, construct the buildings, and self-govern. The goal of this dream-campus would not be for students to graduate and move on, but instead to thrive while at school. If students raised questions about the purpose of what we were reading in a class, the question would not be brushed aside as disruptive of the end-goals, but seen as the start of a conversation worth having. While this continues to motivate me today, I am still not sure that I was correct in placing so much expectation on my schools to help me in life, nor am I sure that making schools more capable of offering this help is a valid hope to hold on to today. Indeed, many of the critiques of high school that I had as an anarcho-curious teenager and that I still hold today are critiques of the system of schooling in relation to the larger socio-economic context. There is an extent to which making better schools will not fix the larger problems that are related to, but perhaps ultimately outside of, schooling. This challenge of wanting to improve schools while also believing that they are part of a broken system continues for me to this day and is a running theme in Rancière's work – a theme he addresses in part by way of his notion of the police order.

Would a better school, such as those for which I drew blueprints in my high school journals, have helped me through those difficult times? Are schools meant to help in that way? If not, what are they good for? Are schools just about allowing those with the will

and the support to succeed, while further disenfranchising or keeping stagnant those without will? Is the student's environment outside the school the most important factor in their success? Is there some societal value that emerges from schooling that does not necessarily feel beneficial to every individual? Should I interpret my failings in school as valuable nonetheless? If we were to look at this same scenario but I was a person of color, LGBTQ, or otherwise had cards stacked against me in terms of privilege in our society, would we answer these questions in the same way?

If I were to stop the narrative at the high school level, I would have a good justification for studying someone like Rancière, who grapples with the question of how a state institution such as a school does or does not contribute to genuine possibilities for students, and who grapples with the question of the role of the will in relation to realization of possibilities or one's potential. As I previously suggested, however, the reasons for studying Rancière are not derivable from my high school experiences alone.

To summarize the next expanse of time after barely graduating high school, I did not swiftly enter into college. Given my political commitments to grassroots living, I was skeptical about the need for a degree. I joined an anarchist collective, hitch-hiked to anti-war marches, continued publishing zines, and was not invested in going through traditional channels in order to make changes in the world – a general orientation that is also supported by Rancière's arguments regarding politics. My critique of wisdom, a la *Wizdumb*, was heartfelt and lived. One could also analyze this phase of my life and propose that my lifestyle choices were a response to a rootless home life growing up. My commitment was to a life of integrity according to what I felt was right, and this meant that

I rejected a lot of the traditional models for success and normalcy: I didn't shave my legs, rarely bought new clothes, biked instead of owning a car, and so on. Suffice it to say that deciding to enroll in two philosophy courses at Concordia University in Montreal, after hitchhiking throughout the U.S., France, England, the Netherlands, and Canada, took some evolution on my part.

This evolution involved a discipline of the will, in that I no longer told myself that I was incapable of flourishing in any sanctioned activity, academics being one of them. I had decided at the time that I wanted to be happy, that I wanted to help as many people as I could, and that I was not going to blame others for my failure to live up to my full potential. I decided to make certain compromises in my beliefs so that I could accomplish more important things like being satisfied with myself, being autonomous, and being able to help people. This was how I rationalized going to university, and how I would eventually adopt other lifestyle choices that seem to go along with being successful in academia: looking presentable, attending classes, complying with institutional policies, and renting rather than couch-surfing. Recognizing that I was responsible for my own life and that others also had to worry about their own, I developed a different kind of appreciation for people – transforming my attitude toward teachers into one in which I saw them as people living out their lives, rather than people who owed me something or were to blame for the problematic system(s) of which they were a part. In sum, I recognized that compromise was inevitable, and that I could still perhaps do well even within systems I felt were fraught with problems. I share this sentiment with Rancière who, though asserting the

inevitability of certain issues within any social institution or gathering, maintains a semblance of hope and keeps an appreciation for individuals at the core of his work.

With this ambition to take charge of my life and to recognize where each person was in their own journey, I found myself on a farm in British Columbia. There, I was living while working as a cherry-picker over the summer, among college students from Quebec who were indulging in a carefree experience before returning to school. I was simply a "ragamuffin vagabond," as my mom affectionately called me, traveling with no immediate plans. It was on that farm that, in speaking with Quebecois college students, I was told that I should read Plato, and that I would like him. That summer of cherry picking, talking with kindred spirits and reflecting on my life, set the stage for my decision to try to set down some roots in Montreal.

I had tried taking a few classes at a community college at the advice of my dad and stepmom a couple of years prior to that, one of which was Asian Philosophy. I had enrolled because I had an interest in Taoism; I had no idea what philosophy was. I had dropped out of those classes, so attending Concordia University in Montreal was the first time I was taking college seriously. In that first semester at Concordia, enrolled in two Philosophy courses due to the suggestion (by that friend on the cherry orchard) that I would like philosophy, I discovered that the magazine *Wizdumb* I had started in high school, being a critique of knowledge(s) in schools, family, and culture, was nascent philosophy. As a teen I had been disappointed by the norms I was compared against, the expectations I could not (or did not feel I could) live up to, and the contradictions I saw around me. I had questions that were left unanswered in classes. I felt lost regarding my

purpose, my value, my abilities. Upon learning that philosophy meant *love of wisdom* (I learned this in the course on Pre-Socratic Philosophy), it did not take long for me to make the connection that it was perhaps philosophy that had been missing in my high schools. In my understanding of this ancient practice, loving wisdom involves, among other things, contemplating the notion of wisdom and recognizing the wisdom you possess. As a teen, I was hung up on external standards of intelligence, success, and wisdom. I had lost the appreciation for wisdom that can be found within, wisdom that can legitimately be examined and explored rather than taken for granted as something external to oneself.

A big part of what disappointed me in high school was the way in which the educative system, which I did not enter voluntarily, seemed to be unquestioned. Although I was disgruntled as a teen, I had to decide to either do what it took to pass the classes or fail. The standards by which I was compared were determined before I arrived at the school. I did not have the option of questioning the purpose of school, or the space to engage with ideas about what my own purpose might be. There did not seem to be possibility for engaging in school in a way in which I could contribute to changing it so that it was more suitable for a person such as myself, who was having a hard time in life. That lack of a space to be critically engaged and to be appreciated for my perspective is what I have since designated as a lack of being able to question, and ultimately an absence of philosophy. If there were a place in my public schools where questioning, examination of possibilities, and thinking for its own sake could have been nurtured, I think I would have felt more comfortable enduring uncertainty.

Granting that we are required by law to be in school, one would think that school is supposed to have positive consequences, for surely a required four years in which harms are inflicted would seem more like a punishment. I spent four years going to different high schools, not by my own choice. When I turned eighteen I was legally responsible for my choices, but I do not feel that I had the proper support leading up to that point to be able to make informed choices. If school somehow damages students or makes their lives harder (by making them feel bad about themselves, by making employment more difficult, etc.) then perhaps the state ought to be held accountable for arguably inflicting such harms. Again, there are limitations to what a school ought to be expected to achieve, but these are some of the sentiments I struggled with as a teen and which I still ponder today.

Given my experiences in high school and my later exposure to philosophy, shortly after declaring myself a Philosophy major I became driven to create a philosophy-based high school. In my master's thesis on the topic I argued in part that a philosophy-based high school – wherein reason and reasons could be explored, and where the purpose of schooling could itself be problematized – would be a more hospitable place for the students otherwise ill-served by the school's structure.[1] While in college I have encountered arguments as to why reason and a search for objectivity may be problematic and may reinforce or justify systems of domination. Just before completing my thesis I discovered the sub-discipline of K-12 philosophers who have been working for decades to

1. Jessica Davis. "The Ideal School: Justifications and Parameters for the Creation of Philosophy-Based High Schools." Master's Thesis. Montezuma Publishing: San Diego. 2012.

help implement what I lacked in high school, and I have learned through this movement of some principles that also challenge my glorification of reason.

When initially exposed to the Philosophy in Schools movement, I did not grasp all the varying approaches to bringing philosophy to schools, so I assumed that advocates were all about letting high school students read the same philosophical texts I was reading as an undergraduate. I came to find that there are different approaches, some of which hinge on divergent values rather than merely practical considerations. In learning about and studying philosophy for children and community of philosophical inquiry specifically, I have come to further question appeals to knowledge in the classroom, and indeed have come to see that the different methods of philosophizing in K-12 settings are based as much on principled values around schooling and philosophy as they are on practical considerations. Indeed, I have come to believe that community of philosophical inquiry best supports the vision I have in mind when I imagine how philosophy might help students in the way I wish I had been helped as a teen.

There are a few things at work here and elucidating them will help to clarify why Rancière is so relevant to me. First, in my drive to open a philosophy-based high school there is an assumption that there is a certain kind of discourse – philosophy – that is not taking place in schools now. This requires a definition of philosophy and proof that it is distinct from other discourses, pedagogies, and academic subjects in schools. It also requires that the philosophy I propose can in fact happen at a school, and that it is not just a name for something fundamentally at odds with schooling. Secondly, there is an

assumption that this could somehow serve more students or be better for everyone – that if it can happen in schools, it should.

To summarize, my trajectory since high school has been to remedy the deficiencies of that institution by insisting on a place for a love of wisdom within the space of school. Is this questioning process the same as reason, and does it necessarily have results that are good for people? Does philosophy offer us a special way in which we can critique injustices in schools, or give us tools to think through these issues? Can philosophy help us flourish? Can schools? As will be made clear in my description of his critiques and values of both schooling and philosophy, Rancière is a philosopher who can help to answer these questions, who can help one look further into what is at stake in a teenage student's disavowal of wisdom.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Responding to growing efforts to bring philosophy into K-12 schools in the U.S., this dissertation takes up pedagogical and political concepts found in the works of Jacques Rancière in order to reflect on the relationship between traditional U.S. schooling and the values that may be inherent in the practice of philosophy.[2] Rancière critiques schooling as a mechanism that reinforces and promotes socio-economic inequality. He also argues that academic philosophy – following the rationalist tradition attributed to Plato – is complicit in this justificatory process. Although Rancière admonishes reification of methods, this dissertation contends that community of philosophical inquiry (CPI) is a type of method that Rancière might consider valuable in contributing to better schools.[3]

2. Though my research could have involved philosophy in schools worldwide, I have focused specifically on the U.S. because I attend public school in the U.S. from grade kindergarten until I graduated high school, and thus understand some of the problems on a more personal level than if I were to assess problems found in public schools in other countries. As a further point, some countries see more success in bringing philosophy to public schools, so I gather that there is a special need to find out why it is so challenging to introduce philosophy to U.S. public schools.

3. While community of inquiry was first referred to in the writings of Charles Pierce, I take up the community of philosophical inquiry methodology as proposed by Matthew Lipman and Ann Margaret Sharp. Further discussion of this method and its principles follow, yet it is important to note here that for the remainder of this dissertation I refer to the community of philosophical inquiry coming out of the Lipman and Sharp literature, specifically in the context of U.S. K-12 schools unless otherwise stated. I should also note that I am using the term 'method' here loosely.

The underlying theme of this study should be of interest to scholars of Rancière, advocates of philosophy in schools, and others: it insists that everyone is fundamentally equal in their capacity to flourish, and considers how, through schooling, we might do a better job of acknowledging this equality in our society.[4] This study takes as a starting point that schools are places wherein one can allegedly acquire the skills and social validation necessary to accomplish one's aims. Specifically, U.S. K-12 education is framed as preparation for students to enter the work force or pursue further education before doing so, and in general, to find a place to survive within society. Because it appears that socio-economic factors preclude *all* students from using their schooling to choose and show how they want to fit in to society, and since it is in the best interest of society to continually improve upon designated roles within society, my motivation for this dissertation is to critique any pretense that schools are objective arbiters of wisdom, credibility, or equality. Rather than assuming that students need to acquire certain skills that ("intelligent") adults have, the Rancièrean assumption of equality of intelligence circumvents the requirement of transmitting or eliciting intelligence – the required bodies of knowledge for, among other

4. Even though Rancière does not make use of the term, I find it useful in light of my motivations to help students (I struggled in high school and am inspired in my scholarly work to contribute to better high school experiences for students). I use the term "flourish" without subscribing to a detailed conception of the term. I try to use it as a kind of placeholder. I have in mind that at minimum, flourishing describes the state of being wherein a person's basic needs are met and they can live in a way such that they set goals and achieve them without impeding the flourishing of others. Whether one characterizes this flourishing as happiness or as the realization of one's 'potential,' or as something else entirely, there are difficulties when it comes to assessment. In general, I have in mind that flourishing just means that a person has a life that they are grateful for; an element of self-reflection or meta-cognition, indeed, seems necessary in order for us to be living and grateful to be living.

applications, certain job prospects – and instead compels one to consider the ways in which society might arrange itself in order to recognize and nurture the intrinsic intelligence, or equality, of its members. What might the purpose of schooling be if this equality of intelligence is inherent?

Rancière is very skeptical about the possibility of radical change from within institutions, so it may seem that the attempt to disrupt inequality from within schools is inherently futile. A further issue is that for Rancière, if we insist that our aim is for schools to better contribute to student flourishing, self-efficacy, autonomy, or any such descriptors, there are difficulties due to the implied ability to measure them based on a universal metric. Rancière is not a utopian or teleological thinker. As such, my approach foregrounding this dissertation is to defend the idea that CPI can make U.S. K-12 schools better, yet to take seriously Rancière's skepticism regarding this possibility and indeed, regarding the term *better* itself.

My approach in bringing Rancière and CPI together is not to argue that the commonalities I draw out are comprehensive, representing all the themes and nuance found in each of the respective sets of literature. I also am not insisting that Rancière can only be interpreted and applied in this way, nor that CPI practitioners all endorse each of these values. What I do is pick out pieces of evidence and explore implications of different facets of both Rancière and CPI in order to share with the reader why it is that I believe they are so similar. I suggest that Rancière and CPI have in common certain critiques of schooling, namely inequality, stultification, truth, explanation, progress, and the police order. I assert that there are alternatives values pertaining to schooling that Rancière and

CPI share: the assumption of equality of intelligence, a belief in the separation between language and truth, and the value of dissensus. The positive conception of philosophy that I argue is supported by both Rancière and CPI entails the values of egalitarianism, assertion, and creativity or sitelessness. These values are meant to serve as alternatives to the problematic elements of elitism, method, and truth I show to be found in traditional philosophy. My thesis is that adopting a positive Rancièrean conception of philosophy may help U.S. K-12 CPI practitioners be more congnizant of the danger of replicating the same ills, or critiques of schooling and philosophy, that they are trying to combat when they face administrative, economic, and curricular challenges in their efforts to introduce and expand the practice in schools.

Project Significance

While there is a breadth of literature that takes up Rancière's educationally relevant concepts as well as his criticisms of philosophy, there are only a few brief references to Rancière's positive notions of philosophy.[5] Because Rancière's treatment of philosophy cannot be isolated from his commentary on social order and the function of schools,

5. Since 2003, Rancière has been mentioned forty five times in *Studies in Philosophy and Education*, with seventeen articles that focus mainly on him. He has been referenced in *Educational Theory* fifteen times, with nine of those articles featuring his work prominently, and articles focusing solely on him printed in 2010, 2012, and 2015. He has come up in twelve works in the *Journal of Philosophy of Education* since 2007, three of which focused primarily on him in 2009. In the 2013 issue of *Philosophy of Education* he was referenced twice, with one of the articles focusing heavily on him. In 2010 *Educational Philosophy & Theory* created a special issue about his work, which was made into a 2011 book, *Rancière, Public Education, and the Taming of Democracy*.

focusing on this treatment offers a new lens through which to view CPI as a philosophical practice within schools – particularly when the practice is pitched as a remedy for various social ills including the aforementioned socio-economic inequality. There are a number of philosophers of education who have used Rancièrean notions in order to conceive of or theorize certain applications of such notions, so I am not alone in this endeavor. What is unique in my approach is that I am considering Rancière in light of contemporary efforts to bring philosophy into schools via CPI. I offer an interpretation of Rancière's positive notion of philosophy and consider it in light of principles associated with CPI.

This project is thus significant in a few different ways. This dissertation routes the terrain of the work done on Rancière within philosophy of education and charts the ways in which Rancière may be an unknowing ally to those who advocate for the use of CPI in U.S. K-12 schools. By looking closely at Rancière's negative and positive notions of philosophy, as well as the ways in which CPI literature describes philosophy, it may help to challenge and reinvigorate both the discipline of philosophy and the practice of CPI. In bringing Rancière and CPI into conversation, the following two positions are challenged: that schools can never be emancipatory, and that bringing philosophy into schools will make them better. An important question informing my project can thus be put in this way: How might the articulation of a positive Rancièrean conception of philosophy help in understanding what is at stake in practicing CPI in U.S. K-12 schools? Having contextualized this project, I will now offer more context regarding Rancière.

Context: Rancière's Training, Influences, and Overarching Concepts

Born in Algiers in 1940, Rancière received his formal training in philosophy at the École Normale Supérieure. Specializing in political philosophy and aesthetics, Rancière's broad interests are equality and class struggle. Heavily influenced by his reading of Marx, Rancière worked as a doctoral student under the French Marxist philosopher Louis Althusser. He contributed to Althussers 1965 *Reading Capital* with other students of Althusser's and was involved as an activist in the May 1968 protests.[6] Rancière helped found the journal *Revoltes Logiques* in 1975. In the 1980's, Rancière published his critique of Bourdieu's *The Inheritors, Reproduction, and Distinction* when France welcomed a Socialist government that relied heavily on Bourdieu in its efforts to reduce inequality in education.[7] He is currently a professor of philosophy at The European Graduate School and professor emeritus at the Université de Paris, VIII. He is best known for his works, *The Philosopher and His Poor, The Ignorant Schoolmaster: Five Lessons in Intellectual Emancipation, The Nights of Labor: The Workers' Dream in Nineteenth-Century France, The Emancipated Spectator,* and *Disagreement: Politics and Philosophy*.[8]

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6. Oliver Davis, *Jacques Rancière*, vii.

7. Andrew Parker, "Editors Introduction: Mimesis and the Social Division of Labor," in Jacques Rancière, *The Philosopher and His Poor*. Edited by Andrew Parker. Translated by John Drury, Corinne Oster, and Andrew Parker (Durham: Duke University Press, 1983), xvi.

8. Although his formal training is in philosophy, Rancière's work and the secondary literature he inspires extends beyond its scope. He has given so many interviews within and outside of academia that in 2009 a 600-page collection of his interviews in French was published – under the title that translates as *And Too Bad For the Weary*. Davis, *Jacques Rancière*, viii.

Rancière found shortcomings on the part of his mentor Althusser, taking issue with his notion that philosophy, and its alleged mastery of scientific reasoning methods, ought to intervene in order to help proletarians overcome their oppression.[9] Frustration with this view motivated Rancière's early archival work wherein his intention was to disprove the suggestion that proletarians cannot reason alone and are in need of philosophers to help with this task.[10] Philosophizing about working class struggles does not do any good if in doing so it situates the philosopher as having more power than the working class. Rancière's falling away from Althusser launched his series of critiques – particularly prominent in his book, *The Philosopher and His Poor* – against various philosophical schools and thinkers.

Since his intellectual break from Althusser, Rancière strived to diminish the alleged importance of philosophers' theories, dating as far back as Plato, and to reassert the importance of the human subject.[11] Peter Hallward writes, "Rancière prescribes the primacy and equality of subjective experience as the unconditional point of departure for philosophy."[12] Though adopting this focus is somewhat common among the generation of French philosophers to which he belongs, and he has cited Foucault as being his biggest

9. Sudeep Dasgupta. "The Spiral of Thought in the Work of Jacques Rancière." *Theory & Event* 16, no. 1 (2013); Davis, *Jacques Rancière,* 7, 15.

10. Deranty, *Key Concepts*, 17.

11. Nick Hewlett. *Badiou, Balibar, Rancière* (London, GB: Continuum, 2007), 86; Joseph Tanke, *Jacques Rancière: An Introduction* (New York: Continuum, 2011), 13-15.

12. Hallward, "Subversion of Mastery," 38-39

influencer, Rancière has articulated that he is specifically motivated to show just how he departs from French contemporaries in structuralism and post-structuralism.[13] Among the differences between Rancière and his poststructuralist contemporaries, Hallward notes, is the fact that Rancière refuses to "absolutize the subject," whereby one makes subjectivity the ground of everything else.[14] The equality of subjectivity that Hallward highlights does not have an ontological status nor essential, material characteristics for Rancière, because it is based on an assumption. As such, rather than subjectivity being foundational for Rancière, it figures into what I would deem an ethical orientation, wherein one assumes equality across the board.

A central distinction informing Rancière's works is between what he calls the police (or the police order), and politics.[15] The police, also referred to as the partition/distribution of the sensible, can be seen as the sanctioning of roles and relations in society, wherein everything has a place – the absence of void.[16] The sensible is just that which is deemed as visible, recognizable, hearable, and having a place.[17] Rancière writes:

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13. Gabriel Rockhill and Philip Watts, Introduction, Rockhill, Gabriel and Philip Watts, Editors. *Jacques Rancière: History, Politics, Aesthetics* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009), 2; Rancière, "Against an Ebbing Tide," 246.

14. Hallward, "Subversion of Mastery," 39.

15. Charles Bingham and Gert Biesta, *Jacques Rancière: Education, Truth, Emancipation*. (New York: Continuum, 2010), 33-38.

16. Jacques Rancière, *Dissensus: On Politics and Aesthetics.* Edited and translated by Steven Corcoran (New York: Bloomsbury, 2010), 36.

17. Jacques Rancière, "The Thinking of Dissensus." In *Reading Rancière,* 1-17. Edited by Paul Bowman and Richard Stamp (New York: Continuum, 2011), 6-7. Daniela Mercieca and Duncan P. Mercieca. "'How Early Is Early?' Or 'How Late Is Late?':

> The police is thus first an order of bodies that defines the allocation of ways of doing, ways of being, and ways of saying, and sees that those bodies are assigned by name to a particular place and task; it is an order of the visible and the sayable that sees that a particular activity is visible and another is not, that this speech is understood as discourse and another as noise. [18]

Rancière's works that focus on politics exclusively address the reasons why, contrary to there ever being 'democratic institutions,' all institutions are part of this police order, since they stipulate the names and places for those functioning within the institution(s).[19] Institutions are characterized by protocols, policies, organizational roles, strategic visions, and so on. Schools are a primary example of these problematic yet inevitable social institutions.[20]

Rancière holds that schools attempt (not necessarily intentionally) to justify the police order by explaining that we deserve to be in the places we find ourselves because we have merited our roles through demonstration of our intelligence (or lack thereof) in

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Thinking Through Some Issues In Early Intervention." *Educational Philosophy & Theory* 46, no. 8 (2014): 852; Tyson Edward Lewis, *The Aesthetics of Education: Theatre, Curiosity, and Politics in the Work of Jacques Rancière and Paulo Freire* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2012), 51; Claudia W. Ruitenberg, "Art, Politics, and the Pedagogical Relation." *Studies in Philosophy and Education* 30, no. 2 (2011): 216.

18. Jacques Ranciere, *Disagreement: Politics and Philosophy*. Translated by Julie Rose (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 29.

19. Claudia W. Ruitenberg, "Queer Politics in Schools: A Rancierean reading." In *Rancière, Public Education, and the Taming of Democracy*, 105-120. Edited by Maarten Simons and Jan Masschelein (Walden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 110; Lewis, "Realm of the Senses," 288-289.

20. Tyson Edward Lewis, "Paulo Freire's Last Laugh: Rethinking Critical Pedagogy's Funny Bone Through Jacques Rancière." In *Rancière, Public Education, and the Taming of Democracy*, 121-133. Edited by Maarten Simons and Jan Masschelein (Walden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 110; Mercieca and Mercieca, "How Early," 853.

schools. The existence of schools thus contributes to what Rancière calls the pedagogization of society, wherein social sorting and ranking is determined and explained by merit that is allegedly assessed within schools, and measured by a measurer.[21] When this sorting by capacity fails, and Rancière insists that it always does, we attempt to make schools more 'inclusive' because education is taken to be the primary mechanism by which we can fit people into their proper places, or into the distribution of the sensible/police order.[22] This 'proper placement,' where everything is in its right place, is a societal harmony in which there are no outliers. This is a vision of a just society, like that described in Plato's *Republic*, which Rancière readily critiques. Ultimately, Rancière challenges the aim, which some philosophers of education might have, of schools contributing to a more harmonious society – not because there is fault in the *desire* for harmony, but because it is a futile goal.[23]

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21. Sarah Galloway, "Reconsidering Emancipatory Education: Staging a Conversation Between Paulo Freire and Jacques Rancière." *Educational Theory* 62 (2012): 163; Tyson Lewis, "Jacques Rancière's Aesthetic Regime and Democratic Education," *The Journal of Aesthetic Education* 47, no. 2 (2013): 61-62; Pelletier, "Emancipation," 144; Mercieca, "Initiating," 410.

22. Caroline Pelletier, "Beating The Barrel of Inclusion: Cosmopolitanism Through Rabelais and Rancière, A Response To John Adlam And Chris Scanlon," *Psychodynamic Practice* 17, no. 3 (2011): 268.

23. While the school indeed is part of what Rancière calls the 'archipolitical apparatus' insofar as it explains why society is organized in the way that it is, it should be noted that for Rancière we can distinguish between schooling on the one hand, and education/learning on the other; Rancière does have language for education and learning as being positive. This more positive approach is covered in the second section of the following chapter.

Political moments occur when there is a redistribution or reconfiguration of socially accepted time and space.[24] According to Rancière, we ought not to feel defined by the police order and the idea that there are right and wrong ways for social space to be navigated (i.e. correct attribution of values, correct names and interpretations, accurate measures, etc.). He argues that everyone is equally separated by distance (we are all, as speaking beings, 'other than ourselves'), and that the quality of this distance is not predetermined.[25] This should not be misinterpreted as meaning, however, that knowledge is relativistic. It is rather, as Caroline Pelletier puts it, a "defense of the possibility of politics."[26] Rancière's works have indeed inspired and enriched reflection on possibility within education – on what it might mean to open up a space that has no predetermined ends, that has no set means of assessment.[27]

Each person represents possibility for Rancière because when two or more people are in communication, the issue of the social arises: there will be something left out in communication, there will be disagreement, because there is no way for everything to be

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24. Tanke, *Rancière*, 14-15.

25. Lewis, "Aesthetic Regime," 60; Ruitenberg, "Art, Politics," 220-221; Caroline Pelletier, "Rancière and the Poetics of the Social Sciences," *International Journal of Research & Method in Education*, 32, no. 3 (2009): 275.

26. Pelletier, "Poetics," 268.

27. Mercieca and Mercieca, "How Early," 416; Ruitenberg, "Art, Politics," 211; Walter O. Kohan, "Childhood, Education and Philosophy: Notes on Deterritorialisation." *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, 45 (2011): 354-355; Caroline Pelletier, "No Time or Place for Universal Teaching: The Ignorant Schoolmaster and Contemporary Work on Pedagogy," in *Jacques Rancière and the Contemporary Scene: The Philosophy of Radical Equality* ed. Jean-Philippe Deranty and Alison Ross (New York: Continuum, 2012), 108.

explained, demonstrated, or understood. It would seem that possibility is an important element for CPI and Rancière, regardless of where CPI is implemented. So where does possibility fit into the overall trajectory of this project? I draw attention to this thread within both bodies of literature as a way to frame the response to the overall question of this dissertation, regarding whether philosophy is possible in schools. Indeed, it seems that this positive notion of philosophy for Rancière is quite analogous to the notion assumed in CPI.

It is likely that if one is familiar with and sympathetic to Rancière's works, so heavy with critiques of philosophy, one is also weary of explanations themselves and is not jumping at the chance to pigeon-hole ideas nor rigidify practices. Nonetheless, within Ranciere's works and interviews there are glimmers of demanding and radical accounts of Rancière's *ideal* philosophy. There are a small number of places where Rancière offers positive descriptions of philosophy, and yet a smaller number of places in the secondary literature where these positive descriptions are investigated. These positive instances of what philosophy is or can be are, in my view, worthy of consideration in light of the movement to bring philosophy into K-12 U.S. schools.

Given that much work has been done to show how we can bring other concepts of his into schools, formulating a Rancièrean notion of philosophy may be particularly interesting and useful for those who are part of the movement to bring philosophy itself into schools. On the face of it, this is not an easy project, however. Rancière writes:

> My practice of philosophy goes along with my idea of politics. It is anarchical, in the sense that it traces back the specificity of disciplines and discursive

> competences to the 'egalitarian' level of linguistic competence and poetic invention. This practice implies that I take philosophy as a specific battlefield.[28]

Rancière depicts this as a battlefield because philosophy entails a continuous project of staking claims, building arguments only for them to be taken apart, parsing ideas up into concepts only to be disputed, and so on. This practice need not be viewed as properly implemented only by those with special training, those who have 'superior' knowledge to those with 'inferior' knowledge. As speakers, as participants in shared language, as communicating beings with the capacity to express unique perspectives, every person can participate in philosophy.[29]

The suggestion that philosophy is a battlefield may strike some as quite challenging and is certainly provocative, particularly when applying this notion to the practice of philosophy in schools. A school, and much less a classroom, is not typically thought of as a battlefield. What I take to be meaningful about this provocation is that it helps to illuminate features relevant to conversations about bringing philosophy into schools: what is philosophy? What is a school and what should it be? Further, what is at stake in the ways in which we define philosophy in schools? For example, there is a lot of debate about what

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28. Rancière, "The Thinking of Dissensus." 14-15.

29. It should be noted that the communication argument here has been criticized. It has been suggested that Rancière's argument regarding the equality of capacity is predicated on verification of actual capacity, thus allegedly making vocalization and use of language conditions of verification that exclude those who cannot vocalize, and can valorize colonial power, depending on which language is expected to be used. See Christopher Watkin, "Thinking Equality Today: Badiou, Rancière, Nancy," *French Studies: A Quarterly Review* 67.4 (2013). Awad Ibrahim, "Criticality Without Guarantees: Reading Critical Pedagogy Strongly Through Freire and Rancière" *Philosophy of Education* (2013): 195.

constitutes critical thinking – whether such a thing exists, or whether it is just pretension. Much of the debate about whether philosophy is something unique is predicated on conceptions of better kinds of thinking, debates about the purpose of reason, etc. To think of philosophy as a battlefield means that there is something at stake in this debate, that there are competing sides that can bring their grievances to bear on philosophies fertile soil. Rancière's positive depictions of philosophy align with much of those taken up in CPI literature, and it is my hope that this project can show this in order to shed light on both the radical nature of CPI and inform its implementation.

Chapter Outline

In Chapter Two I introduce the reader to Rancière's conceptual framework with regards to schooling, specifically his critiques and alternative values. I rely on secondary literature throughout the chapter, citing the many authors who have also drawn out various concepts within Rancière's works. I highlight key concepts that I have drawn out of his works and that are featured throughout the dissertation: Rancière's critiques of inequality, stultification, truth, explanation, progress, and the police order, and his alternatives to these, which are the assumption of equality of intelligence, a belief in the separation between language and truth, and the value of dissensus.

In Chapter Three I introduce the reader to the conceptual framework of Rancière with respect to his attitude toward philosophy – his critiques as well as what I consider his positive thread of philosophy. I summarize the way Rancière and philosophy is normally discussed in the secondary literature, and show that the positive thread can be teased out so

that it can be applied. In the spirit of Chapter Two, this chapter draws out concepts. In the section outlining his critique of philosophy I include his critiques of elitism, method, and truth. In the section on this positive conception of philosophy I describe the norms that I argue he offers as a response: egalitarianism, assertion, and creativity or sitelessness. I show that dissensus, insofar as it entails these other components, can be a term used to refer generally to his positive conception of philosophy.

Chapter Four brings together the two previous chapters by arguing that there is conceptual overlap between Rancière and CPI. I begin by describing the practice of CPI, then address some of its founding assumptions, first pertaining to schooling and then to philosophy. The practice of CPI takes issue with traditional schooling to the extent that the latter maintains inequality through stultification, assumes objective truth that requires explanation, and is wed to progress and the police order. CPI objects to traditional philosophy to the extent that the latter is elitist, assumes a method that alienates lived experiences, and is predicated on a notion of objective Truth accessible through reason. I argue that, just as with Rancière's norms, CPI entails alternatives to the above problems in the following ways: it assumes equality of intelligence, believes in the separation between language and truth, and values egalitarianism, assertion, and creativity.

In Chapter Five I consider the question of the possibility of philosophy in schools. I argue that when merely bringing the practice to traditional schools, we are required to replicate some of the very practices we want to avoid. However, I show that there are issues with using CPI to create schools based wholly on philosophy as well. I hope to show that despite these drawbacks, there are still good reasons to try both approaches. Ultimately

I argue that there are more than just practical considerations when contemplating whether it is possible to authentically implement the values behind CPI: I look at the way in which the notion of possibility underlies both approaches to CPI in/as schools, and the way that Rancière responds to this notion.

The concluding chapter of the dissertation, Chapter Six, starts by offering a short story to refresh the reader as to the significance of this project. I offer a reflection on the process of writing this dissertation, followed by a suggestion of some potential next steps in this research. Finally, I end with a general overview of my findings – some final words of *wizdumb*.[30]

30. *Wizdumb* here refers to the zine discussed in the preface of this dissertation.

CHAPTER TWO
RANCIÈRE ON SCHOOLING

This chapter introduces Jacques Rancière's critique and alternative vision of schooling. Rancière himself avoids offering definitions, so I am taking some liberties by venturing down this road.[31] In the first section, "Rancière's Critique of Schooling," I characterize the view by outlining his treatment of inequality, stultification, truth, explanation, progress, and the police order. In the second section, "Rancière's Alternative Approach to Schooling," I address his arguments for the assumption of equality of intelligence, the separation between language and truth, and the value of dissensus. Ultimately, this chapter problematizes schooling by critiquing its aims and assumptions.

Rancière's Critique of Schooling

There are many overlaps and few clear distinctions between the terms and lines of argumentation that comprise Rancière's critique, so finding a perfect way in which to present them is a challenge. Roughly, my intention in this section is to share the critiques in such a way that I strengthen the force of the section that follows, "Rancière's Positive Conception of Schooling," wherein I share what I have gleaned as his alternative to these problems inherent to schooling. As such, to disclose Rancière's problematization of schooling, I first cover his critiques of inequality and stultification, which are in contrast to

31. Oliver Davis, Preface in *Jacques Ranciere,* ed. Oliver Davis (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2010), vii-xii.

his norm of equality of intelligence. Secondly, I outline his critique of explanation and truth, which contrast with his belief in the separation between language and truth. Lastly, I offer his critique of progress, which contrasts with the value of dissensus. It will be obvious that there is overlap between these concepts (for example, the notion of progress entails a conception of truth and requires explanation). Again, the reason for separating these terms is to help allow for the connections between principles informing both Rancière and CPI to be more apparent. In order to foreground each of his critiques, let me take a moment to illustrate the traditional view of schooling Rancière has in mind when he wages these critiques.

Context: Traditional Schooling

To put it simply, Rancière views schooling as a compulsory educational system, wherein the compulsory structure itself betrays a host of commitments (economic, political, etc.) and assumptions (regarding the purpose of education, etc.) that dictate and frame the school itself. As such, Rancière's whole attitude toward schooling must be understood in terms of his attitude toward social institutions in general—in other words his conception of the police order, which I described in the previous chapter. Rancière is critical of all social institutions and writes primarily on politics and aesthetics – politics because he scorns attempts to create social harmony through inherently unequal social institutions, and aesthetics because it offers glimpses of the underlying, inherent equality pervading the human world and our perceptions and expressions. In describing the "intimate link" between politics and aesthetics so evident in his works, Tyson Lewis

explains that for Rancière, "aesthetics blur boundaries between what can and cannot be said, can and cannot be seen, thus expanding, reconfiguring, hybridizing/mixing notions of what is common to a community."[32] We all perceive and interpret the world separately; we see the color red and react to unfamiliar cultural practices in disparate ways. Language comes into play when we develop concepts, and this is how we engage in a shared world that can be changed according to our interpretation of our experiences. Rancière argues that insofar as schools are alleged to mitigate inequality, they do so under the assumption that they are able to discern the proper placement of individuals in society, and the proper allocation of resources in that society. In this way, social institutions such as schools reinforce and standardize the police order. Rancière gives some attention to schooling because, he argues, "school and society symbolize each other without end," insofar as schools are meant to administer or even elicit the knowledge necessary for our society to 'progress.'[33] The criticism of schools and their practices that Rancière offers thus has less to do with the effectiveness of certain pedagogies and more with the overarching social and political function that schools themselves serve.[34]

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32. Tyson Lewis, "Education in the Realm of the Senses: Understanding Paulo Freire's Aesthetic Unconscious Through Jacques Rancière," *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, 43 (2009), 289.

33. Jacques Rancière, "On Ignorant Schoolmasters" in *Jacques Rancière: Education, Truth, Emancipation,* trans. Charles Bingham, ed. Charles Bingham and Gert Biesta (New York: Continuum, 2010), 14.

34. Caroline Pelletier, "Review of Charles Bingham and Gert Biesta, Jacques Rancière: Education, Truth, Emancipation," *Studies in Philosophy and Education* 31, no. 6 (2012): 615; Charles Bingham and Gert Biesta and *Jacques Rancière: Education, Truth, Emancipation* (New York: Continuum, 2010), 44 and 113; Peter Hallward, "Jacques Rancière and the Subversion of Mastery." *Paragraph: A Journal of Modern Critical*

Even if a school has some different goal, such as 'fostering independent thinking,' or 'going back to the basics,' the context makes it such that these are still social institutions set on making things *right*. One might ask, "What is so wrong with trying to make things right with a school? Perhaps an ideal school would help students explore and innovate, challenging injustices in their communities and truly reaching their potential. Would such a school then be *wrong* in trying to make things right?" Rancière is not so extreme as to insist that educators or citizens give up such goals. Rancière's predominantly negative depiction of schooling ought not be taken as a dictum to breed autodidactic recluses, but instead, to constantly be vigilant of our attitudes toward schools and our projects within them. Rancière says of his critiques of schooling that they create:

> a dissonance one must, in a way, forget in order to continue improving schools, programs and pedagogies, but that one must also, from time to time, listen to again so that the act of teaching does not lose sight of the paradoxes that give it meaning.[35]

As Pelletier puts it, Rancière is advocating for a practice rather than a state.[36] His critiques are thus of the type that should inform our lived attitudes; we ought not treat Rancière's critiques as encompassing a final and complete justification for abandoning schools. According to Rancière, as we accept that schools and all social institutions are inherently

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Theory 28, no.1 (2005): 28; Galloway, "Reconsidering," 171; Clayton Crockett, "Pedagogy and Radical Equality: Rancière's Ignorant Schoolmaster," *Journal for Cultural and Religious Theory* 12, no. 2 (2012): 169; Yves Citton, "The Ignorant Schoolmaster:" Knowledge and Authority," in *Jacques Rancière: Key Concepts*. (New York: Routledge, 2010), 25-37.

35. Rancière, "On Ignorant Schoolmasters," 15-16.

36. Pelletier, "No Time," 104.

fraught with a kind of homogenizing limitation of perspectives and concepts, we must also accept that positive moments or experiences can transpire anywhere in spite of these problems. Having given a general gloss on his stance on schooling and the type of schooling with which he is concerned, I will now cover the first of the specific critiques in this chapter.

Inequality and Stultification

A major concept in Rancière's oeuvre is inequality, as he is generally critical of efforts to create equality through social institutions, schools among them. Rancière situates himself in conversations regarding equality and takes steps to show the error in having any faith that schools can achieve equality. With his background in Marxist thought, it is understandable that he would have an interest in equality, since communism is generally predicated on the idea that society should strive for equality. Applied to schooling, Ranciere's orientation can be understood as a kind of response to the notion popularly held by educators and put famously by Horace Mann, that education can be "the great equalizer."[37]

Rancière is not wholly unique in this aspect of his critique. Charles Bingham states in his concise commentary that Rancière overtly shares with critical and progressive philosophers of education a criticism of traditionalism's past-oriented epistemology, rigid

37. Horace Mann, ed. Cremin, Lawrence. *The republic and the school: Horace Mann on the education of free men*. (New York: Teachers College, Columbia University, 1957), 87.

conception of authority, and spectatorship on the part of the student.[38] Rancière strays from them, however, for he argues that even those thinkers who are weary of traditional hierarchical models within the student-teacher relationship often still assume that schools are places where social inequalities can and should be solved, and neglect to question either the existence of the teacher, of teaching itself, or the commonly held notions of truth, certain virtues, etc.[39] While Rancière acknowledges that social inequities are often reproduced through schooling, just as has been argued by Pierre Bourdeiu and Jean-Claude Passeron, among others, he parts ways with those who still place faith in schools to somehow remedy this problem.[40]

Rancière argues that equality cannot be mediated and that even a 'better' school does not amount to equality among students nor between schools.[41] For example, the educational policy No Child Left Behind supposes that educators and policy makers can help every student and bring specific groups up to proficiency according to federally

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38. Charles Bingham, "Under the Name of Method: On Jacques Rancière's Presumptive Tautology," *Journal of Philosophy of Education* (2009): 409.

39. Oliver Davis, "The Radical Pedagogies of François Bon and Jacques Rancière." *French Studies: A Quarterly Review* 64, no. 2 (2010): 182; Bingham, "Under the Name," 410-411. It should be noted however that not all scholars agree that in his rebuttal of the critical theorists and progressives, that Rancière is critiquing the act of teaching per se. See 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): 147.

40. Rancière, "On Ignorant Schoolmasters" 9-12.

41. Rancière, "On Ignorant Schoolmasters," 15; Lewis, "Realm of the Senses," 297.

determined standards. While this is a noble initiative, it does assume that there can eventually be a kind of equality, even if it is just at the 'proficient' level in reading per age group, for instance. For Rancière, the very act of determining proficiency is "stultifying" rather than emancipatory. Stultification occurs when it is assumed that knowledge is transmitted directly from teacher to student, and when a student believes herself to be inferior to her teacher on account of this disparity of knowledge.[42] The very idea that knowledge is a good that is allegedly distributed in schools – no less, 'equally' distributed – assumes a dichotomy or distance between knowledge and ignorance, and relies on the state and authority figures to regulate this 'equality of knowledge distribution.' Rancière holds thus that the school is the body that mediates the distance between inequality and future equality, thus postponing its realization.[43]

Explanation and Truth

Explanatory logic – or the grammar of schooling, as some researchers have called it – is the mechanism, according to Rancière, both by which the social order is explained,

42. Mercieca and Mercieca. "How Early?" 852; Jacques Rancière, "The Emancipated Spectator." *Art Forum* (March 2007): 277; Tanke, *Rancière,* 13; Lewis, "Aesthetic Regime," 63; Crockett, "Pedagogy and Radical Equality,"169.

43. Claudia W. Ruitenberg, "Distance and Defamiliarisation: Translation as Philosophical Method." *Journal of Philosophy of Education* 43 (2009): 428; Tyson Edward Lewis, "The Future of the Image in Critical Pedagogy." *Studies in Philosophy and Education* 30 (2011), 42; Walter O. Kohan, "Childhood," 353; Pelletier, "Emancipation," 145.

and upon which the social order necessarily depends.[44] Within the explanatory structure of the school it is the explicator, or teacher, who is presumed, via the 'myth of pedagogy', to lead the student from ignorance to knowledge, thereby assisting in the larger project of allegedly equalizing society and making democracy possible through this schooling.[45] Rancière critiques the assumption that the teacher is more intelligent than the student, and insists that the roles within the 'logic of the spectator,' wherein the student simply watches the teacher, can always be reversed.[46] It is the act of being a "master-explicator" that one should avoid if one is to follow Rancière's directives, for it is the act of explaining that

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44. Jacques Rancière, *On the Shores of Politics.* Translated by Liz Heron (New York: Verso, 1992), 83. Charles Bingham, "Settling No Conflict In The Public Place: Truth In Education, And In Rancièrean Scholarship," *Educational Philosophy & Theory* 42, no. 5-6 (2010): 138. Reference to "grammar of schooling": Jan Masschelein, Jan and Maarten Simons, "The Hatred of Public Schooling: The School as the *Mark* of Democracy," 150-165. In *Rancière, Public Education, and the Taming of Democracy* Ed. Maarten Simons and Jan Masschelein (Walden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 150.

45. Davis, "The Radical Pedagogies," 183-184; Rancière, "The Emancipated Spectator," 270-281; Carl Sanders Säfström, "Rethinking Emancipation, Rethinking Education," *Studies in Philosophy and Education* 30, no. 2 (2011): 206-207; Pelletier, "Emancipation;" 144; Alex Means, "Jacques Rancière, Education, and the Art of Citizenship." *The Review of Education, Pedagogy, and Cultural studies* 33, no. 1(2011): 34-35; Daniel Friedrich, Bryn Jaastad, and Thomas S. Popkewitz. "Democratic Education: An (Im)Possibility That Yet Remains To Come." *Educational Philosophy & Theory* 42, no. 5-6 (2010): 571-587.

46. On the 'logic of the spectator' see Charles Bingham, "Against Educational Humanism: Rethinking Spectatorship in Dewey and Freire," *Studies in Philosophy and Education* (2015): 189. For more on the alignment of Rancière's views with that of progressive and critical pedagogy see Goele Cornelissen, "The Public Role Of Teaching: To Keep The Door Closed." In *Rancière, Public Education, and the Taming of Democracy*, 15-30. Edited by Maarten Simons and Jan Masschelein. Walden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011, 21-22; Sarah Galloway, "Reconsidering Emancipatory Education: Staging a Conversation Between Paulo Freire and Jacques Rancière," *Educational Theory*, 62 (2012): 182; Bingham, "Under the Name," 409.

presupposes ignorance.[47] Indeed, one should avoid wholeheartedly believing that this 'myth of schooling' maps on to reality – that those with certain rankings or pieces of knowledge are somehow more deserving of care, social benefits, etc. A person should not expect nor depend on others to explain their worth to them.

Rancière's critique may be akin to an argument about paradigms or cultural practices, wherein sets of beliefs, foundational texts, historical narratives, or languages are recognized as contingent as opposed to necessary. Rancière is bringing to the foreground the tendency in Western academia (and he traces this back to ancient Greek philosophy) to portray schooling – from preschool to post-graduate studies – as objective and immune from the biases or tunnel vision often attributed to religious sects, conservative or radical political parties, pre-technological civilizations and the like. While it would be one thing for schooling to exist as its own project concerned with its own acquisition of truth or with its own skill-building, it is another to have a connection between this schooling and the distribution of roles within society.

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47. Biesta and Bingham, *Jacques Rancière,* 47. Neil Hopkins, "Freedom as Non-Domination, Standards and the Negotiated Curriculum," *Journal of Philosophy of Education* 49 (2015): 616; Den K. Heyer, "What If Curriculum (of a Certain Kind) Doesn't Matter?" Curriculum Inquiry 39 (2009): 31; Davis, "The Radical Pedagogies," 183-184. Mercieca and Mercieca, "How Early," 852; Mercieca, "Initiating," 411; Teresa N. R. Gonçalves, Elisabete Xavier Gomes, Mariana Gaio Alves, and Nair Rios Azevedo, "Theory and Texts of Educational Policy: Possibilities and Constraints," *Studies in Philosophy and Education* 3, no. 1 (2012): 281; Säfström, "Rethinking Emancipation," 206-207; Galloway, "Reconsidering," 171-172. Indeed, this is one bit of irony that many authors have pointed out in their works in which they have been explaining Rancière's philosophy – the way out, of course, is to instead insist, as Rancière does, that one is "intervening." For example, see a Rancièrian intervention on Biesta's work in Mercieca, "Initiating," 408.

As I indicated previously, Rancière is not so extreme that he is advocating for a complete overhaul of schooling. He is not suggesting that mere vocational training should replace what we have now, or that schools should all be privatized so that there is less danger of widespread dogma. Each of these alternatives would come with its own problems that would still be reflections of the already present inequalities within our society. Rancière is on the side of the people, as is common for those in favor of public education, and he is arguably interested in helping students flourish despite their socioeconomic backgrounds. What he is problematizing is an unquestioned faith that schools *can* achieve all of this. Even though he may not be in the business of making blueprints for schools supporting social mobility (much less any kind of school), Rancière's critique of the limitations of schooling may lead us to think of emancipation as something that can occur regardless of one's place in life, and regardless of the results of your evaluation within schools. In other words, social mobility as a goal should be scrutinized, but the notion of becoming ones best self – granting this does not impinge on others – could still be seen as a good in Rancière's system. Self-improvement, however, is a perfect example of the way in which Rancière warns against fixation on Truth. There are some ways in which truth is not objective or universal – knowing what one is capable of, what it means to be putting in individual effort, etc. When truth is prized in schooling as something that can be acquired and that teachers and administrators can assess your knowledge of, problems of inequality arise. What should be avoided is the process of stultification, wherein an individual is made to feel inferior or incapable due to the fact that

reality and their place in it is repeatedly being explained to them by those in superior positions.

Progress

Throughout his political works Rancière critiques the notion of progress, and schools are an iconic example of how progress features in society. The notion of progress presupposes some kind of end in which there is harmony, or a consensus within a group of people (be it based on scientific knowledge in a scientific community, justice within a society, identity through signifiers, etc.).[48] In order for progress to be made there needs to be some gradation of value wherein the future so to speak is qualitatively better than the present. Rancière writes that "progress is the pedagogical fiction built into the fiction of the society as a whole," and that "never will the student catch up with the master."[49] Rancière insists that even the progressivist teacher is still focused on growth for each student and has, as Cornelissen explains, a "permanent focus on the measurement of each student's individual learning needs."[50] The pedagogy of progress perpetuates a vertical hierarchy

48. Lewis, *Aesthetics of Education,* 6; Lewis, "The Future," 48; Rancière writes "the law of consensus is also a law of identity" in *Moments Politiques: Interventions 1977-2009*. Translated by Mary Foster (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2009), 46.

49. Jacques Rancière. *The Ignorant Schoolmaster: Five Lessons in Intellectual Emancipation*. Translated by Kristin Ross (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991), 119-120.

50. Goele Cornelissen, "The Public Role Of Teaching: To Keep The Door Closed." In *Rancière, Public Education, and the Taming of Democracy*, 15-30. Edited by Maarten Simons and Jan Masschelein (Walden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 22.

between those who are on a lower rung or stage of intelligence and/or emancipation, and those 'progressive pedagogues,' by promising a future realization of equality, all under the pretense that there is some reason that those on the lower rung are dependent on those on the higher rungs for this help.[51] According to this critique, measurement of growth in schools simply serves as an explanation of difference and reinstatement of inequality – between student and teacher, teacher and administrator, etc. – not actual measurement of intelligence nor growth along a path toward knowledge.[52] It is not that hard work or usefulness of research, skill sets, or experience ought to be devalued, but that we ought not entrench all of society's goals and values into one story, one roadmap of knowledge acquisition, with one select rank of people who are allowed to measure progress along such a map.

On this path, there are truth conditions assumed by anyone doing the measuring, whether consciously or not: the teacher/explicator (or measurer) has truth and the student

51. For a discussion of the hierarchy of progress: Mercieca, "Initiating," 409; Hallward, "Subversion of Mastery," 28; Arne De Boever, "Scenes of Aesthetic Education: Rancière, Oedipus, and *Notre Musique*." *The Journal of Aesthetic Education* 46, no. 3 (2012): 70, 77, and 81; Ruitenberg, "Distance," 428; Gert Biesta, "Toward a New "Logic" of Emancipation: Foucault and Rancière." *Journal of Philosophy of Education* (2008): 169-177; Adam Burgos, "Highlighting the Importance of Education and Work in Rancière." *PhaenEx* 8, no. 1 (2013): 302. Pelletier, "Emancipation," 144. On the asymmetry of the Rancereian teacher-student relation: Carl Sanders Säfström, "What I Talk About When I Talk About Teaching and Learning." *Studies in Philosophy and Education* 30 (2011): 489.

52. Galloway, "Reconsidering," 172. This perhaps leaves open the question about whether or not we can measure will and the progression of will. On explanation: Crockett, "Pedagogy and Radical Equality," 169.

(or measured) does not.[53] The notion of progress is thus predicated on a transcendent notion of truth, wherein the truth, or the good, is somehow outside – a conception of truth to which Rancière is adamantly opposed.[54] It is not so much that Rancière is objecting to there being objective facts (e.g. water can exist in multiple states – gas, liquid, solid) or to there being steps toward learning things (e.g. numeration before counting). However, for Rancière's critiques to benefit people in the egalitarian sense that he intends, pedagogues must not hold too tightly to this quest for progress. Nor ought we feel beholden to any value we attribute to this truth acquisition, nor any roles we assign based on such acquisition. If a student does not grasp chemistry or counting or civic skills, this ought not determine how we treat them or conceive of our relation to them; we ought not 'defer equality'.[55]

Rancière thus inspires a focus on the way we situate ourselves in relation to others in each moment, as opposed to focusing on progress and the future.[56] This is easier said than done, because we certainly each set goals, engage in projects that take time and planning, and naturally think about the future. However, this can be a helpful reminder of an ideal that some of us may share, to live our values in each moment. In the case of Rancière's insistence on assuming equality in each moment, this means that pedagogues

53. Biesta and Bingham, *Jacques Rancière,* 108-109; Mercieca and Mercieca, "How Early," 853; Lewis, "Aesthetic Regime," 63.

54. Biesta and Bingham, *Jacques Rancière,* 119.

55. Rancière, "On Ignorant Schoolmasters," 8.

56. Lewis, *The Aesthetics of Education,* 136.

ought to recognize that each person, whether teacher or student, is similar insofar as they have their own individual will and participate in a shared world of concepts, language, customs, and so on.

In this section I began with our common or ordinary understanding of how the school is meant to help 'right' society. Next, I outlined Rancière's critiques of inequality and stultification, explanation and truth, and progress. It should be evident that the burden falls on Rancière to indicate what good can come of schooling. In the section that follows, I move to assist Rancière in this endeavor.

Rancière's Alternative Approach to Schooling

Comprising an alternative to the values, assumptions, and negative patterns central to Rancière's critique of schooling covered above, this section outlines norms that can be drawn from Rancière's works. To be clear, I use the word norm loosely because Rancière does not offer prescriptive recommendations and is indeed opposed to recommendations given the inherent risk of dogmatism. Again, my interest is in applying various aspects of Rancière's conceptual framework to thinking through philosophy in schools; I am not intending to be entirely faithful to Rancière. Among these norms pertinent to schooling that I have mind, which contrast with the critiques outlined in the previous section, are the belief in a separation between language and truth, the assumption of equality of intelligence, and the valuing of dissensus. Before elucidating these norms, it is worthwhile to give a bit more context for Rancière's writings on education.

Context: The Ignorant Schoolmaster

In Rancière's *The Ignorant Schoolmaster: Five Lessons in Intellectual Emancipation,* as well as in several other essays, Rancière describes Joseph Jacotot, a nineteenth century French schoolteacher who engaged in no direct instruction yet had students who learned, insofar as they were able to learn French by referring only to a bilingual French/Flemish copy of the *Telemaque*. The students were able to describe in French what they were reading, after many repetitions of reciting the text. Jacotot had an interpreter give the instructions to the students and then encouraged the students as they recited the text in French. The takeaway from this, in Ranciere's view, is that a teacher can "teach" what he or she does not know. Rancière uses this figure to exemplify "the ignorant schoolmaster," who embodies certain norms.

The ignorant schoolmaster, who is also said to be engaged in what Rancière refers to as universal teaching, allows for her students to experience emancipation, which occurs through subjectivization. The ignorant schoolmaster is not *needed* for subjectivization and emancipation, but if a teacher does not embody the attitude of an ignorant schoolmaster, they will do nothing but impede or overlook emancipation when it occurs. Rancière discusses emancipation and subjectivization in contexts other than in schooling – in art and in real politics, for example. When it comes to his limited works on schooling, however, the ignorant schoolmaster always figures as a kind of ideal. By describing the belief in a separation between language and truth, the assumption of equality of intelligence, and the valuing of dissensus, this section should make the meaning of the resulting emancipation

via subjectivization in the context of schooling clear. We can now begin the journey, and perhaps (to Rancière's dismay) make progress.

Separation between Language and Truth

Rancière asserts that the most important virtue a schoolmaster can have is that of ignorance.[57] Now, is Rancière suggesting that teachers should withhold their knowledge from students?[58] Rancière writes that the ignorant schoolmaster need not be ignorant, but should:

> disassociate his knowledge from his mastery. He does not teach *his* knowledge to his students. He commands them to venture forth in the forest, to report what they see, what they think of what they have seen, to verify it, and so on. What he ignores is the gap between two intelligences.[59]

Content here it not as important as the relationship that the teacher has to the student. To put this in my own language, even if the instructor knows some content, the goal is to be ignorant of the disparity between his knowledge and his student's knowledge – to protect against the tendency to inflate one's ego, propagate a superiority complex, and treat the student with judgment. Thus, it is an intentional disruption of the social hierarchy that may form when/if one assumes that teachers have power (or the ability to influence social

57. Rancière, "On Ignorant Schoolmasters," 1.

58. Sardar M. Anwaruddin, "Pedagogy Of Ignorance," *Educational Philosophy & Theory* 47, no. 7 (2015): 734-746.

59. Rancière, "The Emancipated Spectator," 275.

change) because they are more intelligent or are destined for their social roles because they possess something students and others do not.[60] Ultimately the ignorant schoolmaster must dissociate her mastery from her knowledge, recognizing that her *mastery* – as in, her role as a "master," not her mastery of a subject or skill – and her *knowledge* are not linked in essence.[61] Just because she is a teacher, it does not mean that she is inherently more intelligent, let alone more valuable, than her student. This refusal to stake a claim on the essence of social roles and power, this refusal to affirm that there is something essentially true is but a symptom of Rancière's whole approach to truth: truth simply is not something that language (i.e. society) can represent.

As Charles Bingham and Gert Biesta describe it, Rancière relies on an "emancipatory logic" which is agnostic about truth, holding that truth is immanent to education, rather than something that exists out there in the world that some of us can apprehend.[62] Rancière maintains that although the idea of truth may well be something meaningful, it is not something that can be explained: democratic acts, or demonstrations of equality, are not phenomena that can fit into a coherent logic, be represented, nor given

60. Nancy Vansieleghem, "This is (Not) a Philosopher: On Educational Philosophy in an Age of Psychologisation," *Studies in Philosophy and Education* 32 (2013): 609; Kohan, "Childhood," 353.

61. Jacques Rancière "Against an Ebbing Tide," Interview translated by Richard Stamp, 238-251. In *Reading Rancière,* 238-251. Edited by Paul Bowman and Richard Stamp (New York: Continuum, 2011), 245.

62. Biesta and Bingham, *Jacques Rancière*, 112 and 121; Bingham, "Settling No Conflict," 134-149.

a name.[63] The problems inherent in setting up a dichotomy between those who allegedly have the truth (teachers) and those who do not (students) can be avoided or at least dampened by simply being agnostic about truth. This requires that one disassociate the notion of truth from speech utterances, and acknowledge that the police order is not comprehensive nor definitive, but rather is quite arbitrary and malleable.[64] Indeed, Rancière's ideal, emancipatory pedagogue practices "a more general, active form of ignorance: an ignoring of truth."[65] As Biesta puts it, such a teacher is not 'ignorant' because he or she "lacks knowledge, but because *knowledge is not the 'way' of emancipation*."[66] It thus becomes less important for a teacher to lecture and explain truths.

The kind of truth that enables one to be emancipated, to truly act in accordance with freedom – the very thing that (arguably) allows us to be moral agents, feel happiness, etc. – is the kind of truth that cannot be verified, cannot be known empirically. We are still beings that live in relation to one another; this should not be understood as a recommendation for solipsism. However, this is a recommendation that we distinguish between the faults of socially constructed knowledge and any immanent truths that we may have access to on a more primordial level.

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63. Derycke, Marc. "Ignorance And Translation, 'Artifacts' For Practices Of Equality." In *Rancière, Public Education, and the Taming of Democracy*, 43-59. Edited by Maarten Simons and Jan Masschelein. Walden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011, 47.

64. Bingham and Biesta, *Jacques Rancière,* 132.

65. Bingham and Biesta, *Jacques Rancière,* 132.

66. Gert Biesta, "Don't be fooled by ignorant schoolmasters: On the role of the teacher in emancipatory education," *Policy Futures in Education* 15, no. 1 (2017): 66.

As Pelletier puts it, the epistemological assumption informing Rancière's work is that knowledge is a practice of recognition within communities. She writes that knowledge in *The Ignorant Schoolmaster* is "a position within an evolving set of relations, a move which focuses analysis on the principles by which knowledge is recognized within a collectivity, rather than on whether knowledge is possessed."[67] Knowledge is not something that is done *to* anyone. Instead, knowledge and truth in Rancière's world are done *by* people, characterized by horizontal rather than hierarchical moves, revealing that existing links between power (claims to authority) and knowledge do not map on to any essential differences among people, but are instead historically contingent and arbitrary.[68] Using the new "emancipatory logic" Rancière inspires, one trusts the experiences of students because there is not a belief that truth is only accessible to some.[69]

Rancière criticizes the notion of progress and highlights the gap entailed in any model of growth (you must be separate from X to be able to one day attain X). This gap itself becomes positive when Rancière examines it. The distance between any subject (be they teacher or student) and object ('knowledge' in this case) is precisely the space that provides room for emancipation.[70] If we recognize, for example, that what we call "purple" is contingent on our personal sensory experience, then we can recognize that the

67. Pelletier, "No Time," 101-102.

68. Biesta, "Toward a New;" De Boever, "Scenes," 70.

69. Biesta and Bingham, *Jacques Rancière*, 127.

70. Lewis, "The Future," 41-42.

contingency exists on many different planes, among people, between experiences and concepts. When we recognize that we are each always engaged in some form of this, of attempting to bridge a gap between our inner experiences and our shared world, we can recognize a kind of equality there. We can recognize that apparent differences are still all hinging on what we label things, how we perceive them, and assumptions about what our shared world(s) consists of. That distance between the way the world is (or how we each perceive it) and the way that we name it, discuss it, and value it, makes all the difference. Recognizing this distance can result in a feeling of humility or superiority (Rancière is obviously advocating for the former). Ignoring the distance altogether certainly can amount to a dogmatic perspective in life.

The Assumption of Equality of Intelligence

The assumption of equality of intelligence for Rancière is related to his recognition of the separation between truth and language, because it is all about the way in which we each are equally separated by distance. This norm indeed acknowledges the larger societal impacts that arise when we disregard this equality, serving as a response to the critique of inequality outlined in the previous section. We all start out as equal insofar as we are conscious players in the world, surviving as we do, but then we take on social roles or functions and pretend that they are predicated on something essential, which we know we cannot access or at least not put into words. Some people are more intelligent than others, and thus more deserving of wealth or power, the story would go. To be ignorant of inequality is to see past these social roles and stories. When an ignorant schoolmaster

embodies an ignorance of inequality, this precludes the signification of an objective 'end' of knowledge by which the teacher might judge her students.[71] It is not just ignorance of inequality that the ignorant schoolmaster upholds, but ignorance with respect to epistemic certainty and her role as a teacher, and indeed, the alleged roles that his or her students are allegedly destined for. To put it simply, claims to knowledge, as well as ignorance, have social impacts for Rancière, and we ought to be vigilant about these impacts.

It may seem at this point that the proposition is somewhat naïve or simply wrong. There is a clear difference between the amount of effort some people will put forth in order to achieve certain levels of social success, and it would be absurd to instead pretend that everyone is equal. For example, some people will work several jobs to make ends meet and obtain a better quality of life, while others who already have that same quality of life (maybe they were born into a family that provided it) put forth minimal effort to maintain that experience given their life circumstances and/or demographic reality. Rancière is not asking for us to ignore that there are differences like this. The assumption of equality of intelligence is a direct response to the aim in schooling to *achieve* equality. This aim of reaching equality, Rancière argues, actually presupposes inequality and is premised on the aforementioned problems of the police order and progress.

What is needed for Rancière is an ignorant schoolmaster who can assume equality and guide her students with her will through the space of possibility in which ruptures of new and unforeseen meaning can erupt in any direction – rather than to a set end.[72] This

71. Dercyke, "Ignorance and Translation," 51.

72. Rancière, "The Emancipated Spectator," 277; Lewis, "Aesthetic Regime," 63.

way of viewing equality is different from the typical way it is framed, which is why it is coined 'radical equality.'[73] The assumption that all are of equal intelligence is an axiom or hypothesis from which we act, not an ending place nor fact to prove; it is in principle not limited by expectations or assessments, and is an assumption we must return to constantly.[74] Rancière encourages educators to look more deeply into this tendency to judge students to be unintelligent for various reasons.

Rancière writes, "the equality of intelligence is not the equality of all manifestations of intelligence. It is the equality of intelligence in all its manifestations."[75] This apparent play on words is profound, in my reading, for it is asserting that there is one intelligence that is showing itself in different ways, as opposed to intelligence having many different forms. It is akin to saying that "we are all one person" as opposed to "we are all people." If you take this too literally, you might think that there is just some kind of mistake. Granted, we are all separate people and we are not one person. Rancière is concerned about the impacts of supposing things, though. Suppose that we are all one person, despite the different ways we look, our different perspectives, behaviors, desires, and so on. If we suppose we are still one person despite the apparent differences, we

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73. Crockett, "Pedagogy and Radical Equality;" Jean-Philippe Deranty and Alison Ross, Eds. *Jacques Rancière and the Contemporary Scene: The Philosophy of Radical Equality*. New York: Continuum (2012).

74. Masschelein and Simons, "The Hatred of Public Schooling," 155.

75. Rancière "The Emancipated Spectator," 275.

automatically have more patience for trying to understand others. To me, this is the impact of suggesting that there is only one intelligence manifesting in different ways.

Naturally, this implies that one cannot form judgments about different kinds of intelligence.[76] If one states that there are different manifestations of intelligence without referring to a singular intelligence, then it is much more natural to develop a ranking and classification system. As an egalitarian, Rancière is working to avoid such rankings. Thus, the notion of a singular intelligence plays an important role in thinking through egalitarianism in education. Viewing intelligence as collective, singular, emergent phenomena – rather than varied along a linear path and thus admitting of comparison of different manifestations of it – frees us from the tendency to try to assess different abilities and use them to explain power disparities.[77] Again, this should not all be taken as a directive to completely stop what we are doing in schools (introducing students to skills, equipping students with resources to specialize in careers of their choosing, and so on), but should inspire us to consider our assumptions in schools.

Additionally, conceiving of intelligence as singular should not be conflated with a conception of any kind of singular material force (be it political or otherwise physical in any way), for Rancière explains that this common power of intelligence "binds individuals together to the very extent that it keeps them apart from each other; it is the power each of us possesses in equal measure to make our own way in the world."[78] Nor should

76. Rancière, *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*, 48-49.

77. Hallward, "Subversion of Mastery," 31.

78. Galloway, "Reconsidering," 169; Rancière, "The Emancipated Spectator," 278.

conceiving of intelligence as shared and thus as a 'unitary' entity mislead us to think that consensus or totality is the goal, nor that we can realize or uncover this intelligence or solve 'problems of ignorance' with finality.[79] This singular intelligence will ever be out of reach, evading quantification, and an appreciation for this may serve educators and students well in schools.[80]

Intelligence is argued by Rancière to be synonymous with equality: since intelligence is contingent on understanding another person or being understood by another person, the possibility for which presupposes equal capacity for this understanding.[81] Equality of intelligence implies not only that when one uses language one is assuming that another person can discern one's meaning, but also that there are no two kinds of intelligence – only one which is predicated on "the wish to say and the wish to hear."[82] Rancière suggests provocatively that there is a "collective intelligence of imagination"

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79. Christiane Thompson, "The Philosophy of Education as the Economy and Ecology of Pedagogical Knowledge." *Studies in Philosophy and Education* 34 (2015): 662; Pelletier, "Emancipation," 144; Rancière in interview by *Davide Panagia* "Dissenting Words: A Conversation With Jacques Rancière." Interview with Davide Panagia. *Diacritics*, (2000), 124.

80. Rancière, *On the Shores;* 84. Mercieca and Mercieca, "How Early," 857.

81. Galloway, "Reconsidering," 177.

82. Rancière, *On the Shores,* 81-82; Joris Vlieghe, "Alphabetization as Emancipatory Practice: Freire, Rancière, and Critical Pedagogy." *Philosophy of Education* (2013): 187-188.

wherein there is not a goal of consensus but rather, where dissensus continually occurs, where forms deemed recognizable are constantly challenged.[83]

The Value of Dissensus

Rancière's notion of dissensus can be understood as an alternative to the ideal of progress. For Rancière, real politics (not the police order) is characterized by dissensus – it is a "difference within the same," and it cannot be deduced based on an alleged essence within a given community, nor can it be foreseen or obtain in any place but the present (there is no static end of emancipation).[84] Dissensus is inherently anarchistic, with relations always able to be set up differently.[85] The impetus for emancipation is the recognition that the will does not correspond to a cohesive whole upon which consensus can be reached. Therefore, there is no ordered harmony or end to which we can progress. Of course, people should all set goals, challenge themselves, and grow, but the catch is that there should also be vigilance against the habit of seeing institutions as the arbiters of such 'progress.' For

83. Jacques Rancière, "The Misadventures of Critical Thinking," in *Criticism of Contemporary Issues Serralves International Conferences*, (2008): 193; Lewis, "The Future," 48.

84. Rancière, "The Thinking of Dissensus,"1; Hallward, "Subversion of Mastery," 34-35; On difference: Säfström, "What I Talk About," 489; Galloway, "Reconsidering," 180; Lewis, "The Future," 48.

85. On the asymmetry and horizontology of the Rancereian teacher-student relation and the 'new logic of emancipation': Säfström, "What I Talk About," 489; Biesta, "Toward a New," 175-176.

those interested in challenging the police order, there is a need to be conscious of the internalized metrics and their origin.

When discussing the human will *en masse*, Rancière states, "a force is a force. It can be reasonable to make use of it. But it is irrational to want to render it reasonable," and that "society as such will never be reasonable."[86] The overall picture is thus that the will, or the inherent, equal intelligence shared by all, does not correspond with commonly held notions of rational progress toward consensus nor ideal, harmonized, democratic social institutions. Politics and emancipation, two ideals within Rancière's framework, occur in non-teleological ways, in anarchistic moments that do not conform to predictably discursive frameworks. This is why Alex Means explains that Rancière's notion of education can be described as a *question*.[87] Indeed, Rancière's entire body of work rests on his insistence that signs – words and their stipulated meanings – do not embody an essential connection with their signifiers, and indeed, that we cannot speak of an essential quality of any phenomena (hence his adamant disavowal of ontology).[88] It is easy to see here how this line of thinking corresponds with his belief in the separation between language and truth as outlined earlier.

There can still be *better* schools and *better* police orders, for we can have *better* understandings of "how words, stories, and performances can help us change something in

86. Rancière, *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*, 91 and 96.

87. Lewis, *Aesthetics of Education,* 34; Ruitenberg, "Art, Politics," 222; Means, "Jacques Rancière," 29.

88. Mercieca, "Initiating," 412; Galloway, "Reconsidering," 168.

the world we live in."[89] Carl Anders Safstrom characterizes Rancière's critique of schools as exposing the 'myth of schooling' and suggests that Rancière's notion of dissensus is what *should* happen in schools; we ought to have pedagogy of dissensus.[90] This is not a specific method, but as Safstrom states, entails asking "what do you think differently," and requires that we ask this "in such a way as to prevent an answer that reestablishes the normal circumstances for that thinking."[91] In this way, dissensus is not a technique but "the force through which the naturalness of orders is undone," allowing us to challenge preconceived notions and social constructs through and through.[92] In my view, this sounds just like what philosophy is – challenging all claims to knowledge, and challenging the very premise of a school as a place where knowledge is acquired.

Based on what I have represented from Rancière's works it would seem that we have ample reason to be uncertain about the possibility of a 'pedagogy of dissensus' actually having a positive effect, given his strong warnings against pedagogies of all kinds. However, there are also works of Rancière's and interpretations of his work that give hope to the democratic possibilities inherent in schools, gesturing toward a positive appreciation

89. Rancière, "The Emancipated Spectator," 280.

90. Carl Anders Säfström, "The Immigrant Has No Proper Name." In *Rancière, Public Education, and the Taming of Democracy,* 93-103. Edited by Maarten Simons and Jan Masschelein (Walden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell), 2011.

91. Säfström, "The Immigrant Has No Proper Name," 102.

92. Säfström, "The Immigrant Has No Proper Name," 102.

for schooling.[93] My interest is to unpack the nuance of Rancière's complaints and suggestions about schooling as they pertain to philosophical practice in schools, to hold on to this hope and skepticism while pondering the possibility of philosophy in schools.

Conclusion

For Rancière, while schools may never be emancipatory nor constitutive of equality, there can still be 'better' schools.[94] He admonishes attempts to institutionalize equality, yet also provides glimpses of a proposed alternative logic. In his preface to Bingham and Biesta's book on his educational critiques, Rancière demonstrates this two-part move well:

> Distinguishing the act of intellectual emancipation from the institution of the people's instruction is to affirm that there are no stages to equality; that equality is a complete act or is not at all. There is a heavy price to pay for this escape. If explanation is a social method, the method by which inequality gets represented and reproduced, and if the institution is the place where this representation operates, it follows that intellectual emancipation is necessarily distinct from social and institutional logic. That is to say that there is no social emancipation, and no emancipatory school.[95]

If institutions are needed for people to be intellectually emancipated, then they can obviously become the deciding factor as to whether a given person has become

93. It should be noted that I am using democratic in the Rancièrean sense here. See Bingham, "Settling No Conflict," 139.

94. Lewis, "Realm of the Senses," 297; Rancière, "On Ignorant Schoolmasters," 15.

95. Rancière, "On Ignorant Schoolmasters," 15.

"intellectually emancipated." If this determination is instead in the hands of an individual, and every individual, then equality simply already exists, and schools (at least those whose premise is to contribute to equality) become invalidated. However, this also implies that schools literally cannot be the arbiters of intellectual emancipation. Rancière advocates for us to 'pay this heavy price,' and to strive toward emancipation for all.

We cannot count on any social institution to be emancipatory, but we can see it as a social project to constantly mistrust the notion that we have confirmation regarding truth and who has access to it; we can assume and 'be of the opinion' that all have equal intelligence.[96] We can appreciate dissensus when it occurs, rather than striving for a final harmony or consensus mitigated through schools. Real inequality, in terms of access to resources, wealth in general, freedom from violence, etc., exists in the world. Is the root of this inequality knowledge/intelligence, or is it something we contribute to with our every assumption?

Moving into some conjecture about what 'better schools' might look like for Rancière, it would seem from all this that having a space without ends is the best-case scenario for a school.[97] In contrast to the common aim of putting equality as an end,

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96. Galloway, "Reconsidering," 166.

97. Jacques Rancière, "Thinking Between Disciplines: An Aesthetics of Knowledge," Translated by Jon Roffe. *Parrhesia*. 1 (2006): 5-6. Tyson, in *Aeshetics of Education*, 136, also suggests that it is in refusing to reclaim the past or define the future that the ignorant schoolmaster can recognize the equality that exists in the present. In contrast to the common aim of putting equality as an end, thereby granting that there is something to fix, Rancière offers equality as an initial axiom, and leaves aims and ends out of it; it is precisely by setting those aims beforehand that the assumption of inequality is perpetuated. See Ruitenberg, "Art, Politics," 220 and 221, and Pelletier, "Poetics," 273.

thereby granting that there is something to fix, perpetuating power disparities in the name of reaching harmonious consensus, Rancière offers equality as an initial axiom, and leaves aims and ends out of it.[98] We might thus envision a school of possibility, where the potential in the present moment matters more than the outcomes. Such a school would not emphasize possibility simply to contrast with a school aimed toward progress, but instead would be one in which notions of progress are problematized. There are plenty of models of schools that are intentionally democratic or "free," without curricula, grading, etc., though they are also available only for those who can pay or who have savvy parents; radical schools are not the norm for most U.S. students. Looking further into whether such models would be conducive to Rancièrian norms surrounding education would be an interesting project for the future, and I do this a bit more in Chapter Five, but my focus in this dissertation is to look specifically at the thread of philosophy within Rancière's works, and to apply this to my investigation of one way that philosophy is practiced in U.S. K-12 schools. If we are to operate in our current K-12 public schools geared largely toward outcomes, what does it really mean to be an ignorant schoolmaster who is keen on dissensus? Are those who do CPI on the right track?

As this chapter has illuminated, Rancière critiques schooling yet also invokes many themes and concepts that may be helpful in contributing to better schools. Philosophical readers may have read this chapter with a keen interest in how it is that philosophy relates to Rancière's critique of schooling and his more positive, alternative insights. In my view,

98. Lewis, *Aeshetics of Education*, 136; Ruitenberg, "Art, Politics," 220 and 221; Pelletier, "Poetics," 273.

society entails schooling mechanisms by necessity – whether formally or not, even in the simple mechanism of a shared language – so we ought to accept this whilst also considering ways to respect ourselves and others. My overall aim in this dissertation is to inquire into how Rancière's treatment of philosophy is particularly useful in improving schooling, even if the improvement is simply a dose of humility, given the inherent limitations of schooling. The first step, covered in this chapter, was to look at the context for this project: Rancière on schooling, in both his critical and positive approaches. Shifting the focus now, Chapter Three will investigate Rancière as his work pertains to philosophy itself, so that I may continue building my case for using Rancière's approach to philosophy as a tool for improving K-12 schools.

CHAPTER THREE

RANCIÈRE ON PHILOSOPHY

Having looked in the last chapter at Rancière's critiques of traditional schooling as well as his alternative values, this chapter takes the same approach regarding his treatment of philosophy. This chapter takes up the question posed by Joseph Tanke, in his *Jacques Ranciere: An Introduction*: should we take Rancière's works to be indicative of a "departure from philosophy as such or just philosophy as it is traditionally practiced and conceived?"[99] In other words, might it be that we should not count Rancière as a philosopher, or is he introducing a different way of philosophizing?

To answer Tanke's question, I divide the chapter into two main sections. In the first section, "Rancière's Critiques of Philosophy," I describe Rancière's critique of philosophy as it is traditionally practiced and conceived, parsing the critique into three main focal points: elitism, method, and truth. In the second section, "Rancière's Positive Conception of Philosophy," I describe his account of how philosophy *should* be practiced and conceived, contrasting the former three critiques with what I pick out as his alternatives: egalitarianism, assertion, and creativity. By putting forth these critiques and alternatives I show Rancière to indeed be departing from how philosophy is traditionally practiced and conceived, setting the reader up to see, in Chapter Four, the similarities to how community of philosophical inquiry (CPI) conceives of philosophy.

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99. Tanke, *Rancière*, 7.

I would like to remind the reader that trying to categorize, systematize, or order any part of Rancière's works, particularly in the interest of fleshing out what we might call positive threads within his conception, is a bit paradoxical. In the same way that explaining Rancière's critique of explanation may come across as ironic, so too might it seem strange to argue for these kinds of actionable ideals or clear concepts. Rancière himself insists that he is not trying to set norms, that his practice of philosophy is admittedly "difficult," and that he does not have a system.[100] My project here is not wholly consistent with Rancière's project. My intention is thus to allow what I appreciate from him to inform my own thinking about philosophy in schools.

By way of another disclaimer, what I am calling positive may be understood as what I take to be Rancière's suggestions on what he either thinks philosophy can and should do, or what he thinks it is when done properly. It is an ideal we might consider if we want to avoid reproducing the same kind of problematic behaviors or assumptions Rancière condemns. It can be thought of as a contrast to the negative treatment of philosophy in his works wherein he is critiquing the tradition or profession of philosophy. Rancière has been referred to as having an emancipatory philosophy, and has used this term to describe the Jacototian pedagogy he praises in *The Ignorant Schoolmaster* and elsewhere.[101] I avoid using the phrase "emancipatory philosophy" because to me it

100. Rancière, "The Thinking of Dissensus," 17.

101. Hallward writes that Rancière is "one of only a small handful of French thinkers who persist, today, in a genuinely emancipatory conception of philosophy." See Hallward, "Subversion of Mastery," 43.

connotes a structured approach, and does not fully capture the way in which Rancière offers only piecemeal suggestions portraying the positive thread in his conception of philosophy. Ultimately, I think that the connotation of "positive philosophy" is less problematic than the connotation of "emancipatory philosophy," but it may in the end be a stylistic choice. In any case, this chapter is meant to demonstrate the appeal of looking at Rancière's quite loosely termed *conception of philosophy*, including the critiques and loosely termed *positive threads*, so that we might apply this to schooling, given what we know of his critiques and alternatives regarding schooling from the preceding chapter.

Rancière's Critiques of Philosophy

Figuring consistently from his very first publications to his most recent, Rancière's critiques of philosophy can be divided into three issues which I will address in this order: elitism, method, and the notion of truth. It is not my intent here to assert whether Rancière is correct in his critiques, it is simply to characterize his dissatisfaction with philosophy writ large.[102] Further, I have chosen to sort and focus his work using these three terms due to my larger interest in comparing his conception of philosophy with that of CPI, as I will do in the following chapter.

102. Indeed, I would like to challenge some of his interpretations of the Platonic dialogues, but this is not the place for those challenges.

Elitism

Rancière is adamantly against claims that connect philosophy with positions of power, whereby a person of authority claims that it is their intelligence or superior propensity to reason that explains their social function. Accordingly, he does not endorse the arguments that professional academic philosophers are the only people who can or should think philosophically. He voices this concern with what are referred to as "intellectuals" in an interview: "what is at issue is the idea of a specific class of intelligence that has a role by virtue of its superior capacity."[103] He pins the source of this kind of intellectual elitism on the tradition of philosophy popularized by Plato, arguing in *The Philosopher and His Poor* that Plato's *Republic* is largely meant simply to ensure that philosophers are viewed as inherently, uniquely elite as compared to other *types* of people:

> Philosophy cannot simply justify itself as a post within the division of labor; if it did so, it would fall back into the democracy of the trades. Hence it must exacerbate the argument from nature, giving it the shape of a prohibition marked on bodies (…) There simply are bodies that cannot accommodate philosophy – bodies marked and stigmatized by the servitude of the work for which they have been made.[104]

It is argued in the *Republic* that philosophers are able to discern fundamental principles, harmonize their souls, and live more virtuously than those who do not practice philosophy, based on an alleged propensity built into the nature of certain individuals. Rancière takes issue with the implicit elitism in this argument. While this elitism might play out in arguments or assumptions about capacity, it also manifests in arguments related to

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103. Rancière, *Moments Politiques,* 146.

104. Ranciere, *The Philosopher and His Poor*, 32.

circumstance. We can easily see these in operation if we imagine an argument that children cannot philosophize, or an argument that real philosophy only takes place in certain kinds of departments (those that require a logic course of their undergraduates, for example). While there is nothing wrong with setting up criteria, the point here is to look at the social consequence of defending certain criteria.

Nick Hewlett argues that Rancière's critique of philosophy shows us "it was *established* philosophy and sociology that were intrinsically elitist."[105] So it may not be the act of philosophizing or even reasoning that is under attack here, but the association of that act with social roles (i.e. professors of philosophy). Indeed, Rancière writes, when speaking of intellectuals, "the very idea of a class in society whose specific role is to think is preposterous and can be conceived only because we live under a preposterous social order."[106] The critique is aimed at the suggestion that some people should not philosophize, and that being thoughtful about our actions is a task that can and should be delegated to only some individuals for the sake of economic efficiency.

Rancière's critique of the field of philosophy as a discipline challenges those in the 'ivory tower' to question their implicit or overt claims to have a better understanding of things, via philosophical reasoning, than do those in other professions.[107] Again, his

105. Hewlett. *Badiou, Balibar, Rancière,* 90. Italics my own.

106. Rancière, *Moments Politiques,* xiii.

107. Hallward, "Subversion of Mastery," 28-29; Rancière, "Thinking Between Disciplines," 10.

critique of philosophy, as with his critique of schooling, should be understood in terms of his attitude toward social institutions in general. Hallward writes that:

> According to Rancière, philosophy per se begins by trying to distinguish people capable of genuine thought from others who, entirely defined by their social or economic occupation, are presumed to lack the ability, time and leisure required for thought.[108]

Hallward is referring to Rancière's critique of the Philosopher King model, which he reads quite literally in Plato, and which he sees replicated time and again in other philosophers. The thread of egalitarianism that runs through Rancière's works is in tension with philosophers who claim to have access to a *logos*, or an ability to explain the world using a special formula (reason) to which they have exclusive access (as Rancière reads Plato to have done). As such, we must understand the second primary critique of philosophy as a critique of method – investigated in what follows.

Method

One might ask whether Rancière is taking issue with the notion of reason or logos as an underlying order, or with the alleged exclusive possession of this reason. Does Rancière have a problem with the idea that there might be a reasonable order to everything, underlying appearances in the way *logos* is represented in some Platonic dialogues, or does he have a problem with the idea, as presented in the *Republic*, that it is philosophers in particular who can really know and understand this reasonable order? To put the question

108. Hallward, "Subversion of Mastery," 28.

another way: is Rancière troubled simply by the concept of the Philosopher King, or is he troubled by philosophy itself as presented in the Platonic dialogues?

The method of reason is one aspect of academic philosophy that Rancière attacks because academic philosophers claim to have special knowledge of this method. In Plato's *Republic* this method is presented as dialectical, wherein one works toward reaching the first principle of things – a more complete understanding of the form or foundation of everything – by looking past mere material senses. From the *Republic*:

> Dialectic is the only inquiry that travels this road, doing away with hypotheses and proceeding to the first principle itself, so as to be secure. And when the eye of the soul is really buried in a sort of barbaric bog, dialectic gently pulls it out and leads it upwards.[109]

This method generally entails defining terms or concepts in contrast with their opposites, and slowly crystalizing them by way of eliminating non-essential parts. This procedure of coming to know things through the dialectic, which philosophers are alleged to be privy to in the *Republic*, is what Rancière seems to be concerned about with respect to method.

It has been said of Rancière's projects, such as his archival work on workers' communications, that he "calls into question the protocols and practices of both philosophy and historiography through his own participation in writing."[110] For example, Rancière warns that when people interpret *The Ignorant Schoolmaster* as advocating for the application of a method, they become rigidified and use whatever method they devise

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109. Plato, *The Complete Works of Plato*, Edited by John. M. Cooper, translated by G.M.A. Grube (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1997), *Republic* 533c.

110. Mark Robson, "Hearing Voices," *Paragraph: A Journal of Modern Critical Theory* 28, no. 1 (2005), 5.

dogmatically. Rancière himself insists that he has neither a philosophical nor a pedagogical method, and that he is not advocating for either. He insists that philosophers should never fall into the trap of putting a value on one discursive practice as though it were of final and of ultimate value, for one cannot and should not prescribe a science of emancipation.

Rancière argues that even an abstract notion such as reason imposes something on the world: "there is no clear divide between theory and its practical application (…) All transformation interprets, and all interpretation transforms."[111] Every kind of theory we can construct to describe actions in the world is born out of lived experiences, and means something different depending on the context (one example that Rancière uses is trying to apply universal rules to the prohibition of Islamic headscarves, or ideals of democracy and freedom used to justify military invasion.)[112] There is thus no practical way of isolating reason, nor of referring to universal concepts in order to justify actions in such a way that everyone would agree that one is "right." As Hallward puts it, "it is a peculiar delusion of conventional philosophy, Rancière suggests, to presume that thought proceeds not only as a form of dis-placement but as fully independent of place."[113] So it is not only the elitism that comes from claims to special knowledge, but method itself that is questionable from a

111. Rancière, *Moments Politiques,* xii.

112. Rancière, *Moments Politiques,* xii.

113. Hallward, "Subversion of Mastery," 31.

Rancièrean perspective.[114] To understand more about his concerns about elitism and method, let us look at what he has to say about truth with regard to philosophy.

Truth

While Rancière does not always invoke the term truth when attacking traditional philosophy, I am highlighting two instances where he does utilize the term.[115] The first quote is pertaining to the hierarchy associated with claims about truth. He writes, "If there is a privilege of philosophy, it lies in the frankness with which it tells us that the truth about Truth is a fiction and undoes the hierarchy just as it builds it."[116] We can conclude from this that Rancière refrains from making claims focused on objective truth because he believes such claims to ultimately have an elitist effect. Under attack here, of course, are

114. The obvious problem with taking issue with reason, and with insinuating that there may be no better or worse way to use reason, is that it would make it quite difficult to apply any of this, or to critique issues of injustice. There is an issue of consistency here: to claim that reason has no special status would appear to be based on a kind of reason. It is quite difficult to make such assertions without appearing contradictory, but this appears to be the nature of the beast. To make a claim, as Socrates did, that all one knows is that one knows nothing, is provocative and paradoxical. Clearly,Rancière is motivated, by an interest in equality. In his effort to work towards equality, or elucidate the problems that impede realization of equality, he makes use of paradox. In order to bring to light the way in which political commitments are entailed by claims regarding reason and one's access to it, Rancière himself makes a claim *about* claims about reason: that they are nothing but arbitrary configurations based on one's political beliefs.

115. It should also be noted that there is plenty of secondary literature about Rancière's conception of truth. As an example, see Bingham and Biesta, *Jacques Rancière: Education, Truth, Emancipation*.

116. Jacques Rancière, *Reading Rancière*, Paul Bowman and Richard Stamp, Eds. (New York: Continuum, 2011), 15.

essentially the Platonic forms, presented in the dialogues as supremely objective. Rancière has stated that although philosophers often make categorical and affirmative statements, he cannot bring himself to make such statements in earnest.[117] Claims about Truth (the capital T represents an objective, irrefutable category) can preclude the lived experiences or challenges of others. Philosophy, for Rancière, allows us to always put into question these allegedly objective and irrefutable truths, particularly surrounding the social impacts of such assertions (i.e. hierarchies).

Socrates says in the *Republic* that the dialectic can always bring one up and out of confused, muddled thoughts – an act that I take to be somewhat akin to Rancière's claims about the ability of philosophy to draw new boundaries. In Plato's picture there is a hierarchy whereby the dialectic allegedly allows us to draw closer to truth through repeated steps in inquiry. The dialectical move itself is intended to challenge assumptions from the outside, by questioning them, offering counterexamples, highlighting contradictions, and so on. Rancière's positive iteration of philosophy entails a similar move of critiquing from the outside by pushing against barriers or distinctions allegedly grounded in arguments, and by challenging the assumptions and arbitrary distinctions on which they are based. However, Rancière's movement is specifically not hierarchical and linear, nor is it based on an ontological conception. This orientation corresponds with his views on politics or democracy, where for political or democratic moments to obtain they must transpire as

117. Rancière, as quoted by Jean-Philippe Deranty and Alison Ross in their article "The Evidence of Equality and the Practice of Writing," *Jacques Rancière and the Contemporary Scene: The Philosophy of Radical Equality*. Jean-Philippe Deranty and Alison Ross, Eds. (New York: Continuum, 2012), 3.

eruptions – breaks with the order of things. Plato's picture is known for being hierarchical insofar as the Form of the Good is analogous to the sun casting light on all earthly existence, informing its being; Truth is at the top and false beliefs are below. Rancière, by contrast, challenges the notion of truth in every place the word is uttered, thereby destabilizing a model of progress.

This brings me to the second quote from Rancière that I would like to highlight as an instance of his conception of truth, this one found in *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*. Rancière writes:

> Truth doesn't bring people together at all. It is not given to us. It exists independently from us and does not submit to our piecemeal sentences. [...] But for all that, truth is not foreign to us, and we are not exiled from its country. The experience of veracity attaches us to its absent center; it makes us circle around its foyer. [...] Thus, each one of us describes our parabola around the truth. No two orbits are alike. [...] No one has a relationship to the truth if he is not on his own orbit.[118]

Truth for Rancière is always fractured when we try to articulate it, which means that we appear to be in very similar position to Truth as in Plato's system. The difference between Rancière's notion of Truth and Plato's, at least if we are on board with the common, literal interpretation of the dialogues that he is following, is that for Rancière we are *each* "orbiting around the truth," thus precluding the possibility that there is one class of people that is closer to it.[119] Furthermore, for Rancière the truth would seem internal and subjective rather than external, as he reads Plato's Truth to be.

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118. Rancière, *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*, 58-59.

119. To be fair, if we interpret Plato more charitably, anyone can use the dialectic to get closer (yet never all the way to) truth. This is not Rancière's reading of Plato,

The issue Rancière has with the traditional philosophical notion of truth as he finds it in Plato, or the notion that is implied by the previously mentioned tendencies – toward elitism and a reification of reason – is that it assumes that there are distinct parcels of knowledge that can be apprehended, and that there are certain kinds of people or methods that can alone come close to these parcels. As Andrew Schaap asserts, Rancière "turned away from philosophy" because of what he felt to be its tendency either to fetishize concepts or to fetishize praxis, and to treat concepts and praxis as separate and distinct.[120] Rancière's central focus, as Tanke points out, is to trace the "form philosophy assumes when it founds itself by partitioning the world on the basis of supposed distinct natures."[121] Emmanuel Renault asserts that in much of his critical work, Rancière takes issue with the attempt in political philosophy to "realize the essence of philosophy (that is, the philosophical description of a social order grounded on a principle.)"[122] Schapp argues that in *Disagreement* Rancière describes philosophers like Plato as feeling "scandalized" upon

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however, for he interprets the Philosopher King's appearance in the *Republic* quite literally.

120. Andrew Schaap, "Hannah Arendt and the Philosophical Repression of Politics," in *Jacques Rancière and the Contemporary Scene: The Philosophy of Radical Equality*. Jean-Philippe Deranty and Alison Ross, Eds. (New York: Continuum, 2012), 146.

121. Tanke, *Rancière,* 28.

122. Emmanuel Renault, "The Many Marx of Jacques Rancière," 175. It should be noted that on page 186 Renault concludes by suggesting that Rancière ends up with a "Sartrian philosophy of absolute freedom," and "a philosophy of political freedom grounded on the communist principle of equality." This is one of several places wherein Rancière's philosophy is referred to, but this is separate from my focus on Rancière's conception of philosophy as such.

concluding that politics is actually groundless and anarchistic; Plato's endeavor to uncover the underlying order and find the right place for everything was fruitless, in Rancière's view.[123] However, we know that Rancière does not want to give up on the act of philosophizing, despite the failures of his predecessors and their unfortunate propensity to uphold elitist orientations toward method and truth. Therefore, let us move on to the positive threads within Rancière's conception of philosophy to see where hope might be found.

Rancière's Positive Conception of Philosophy

In this section I first point out several places in the secondary literature where Rancière's conception of philosophy is addressed, highlighting that more work could be done to think through his normative or positive conception of philosophy. Next, I show how such a positive account would contrast with the critiques of philosophy I reviewed in the previous section of this chapter. To build this positive account, I first argue that Rancière's alternative to the notion of truth critiqued in the previous section is creativity and absence of a site. Next, I describe why in contrast to method critiqued in the previous section, Rancière favors assertion. Finally, I suggest that in contrast to elitism, and quite consistent with the aforementioned critique of inequality, Rancière advocates for egalitarianism. Ultimately, when this chapter concludes, a Rancièrean philosophy characterized by dissensus should have taken shape.

123. Schaap, "Hannah Arendt and the Philosophical Repression of Politics," 146-165.

Context: Secondary Literature

While philosophy as a topic is abundant in the secondary literature on Rancière, it appears that there is room to more clearly delineate the negative and positive threads that make up Rancière's conception of philosophy. Further, it seems that in general, secondary literature in the fields of aesthetics, political philosophy, and philosophy *tout court* deal more directly with Rancière on philosophy, while philosophers of education write more about educationally relevant themes within his body of work. The secondary literature either deals with Rancière's critiques of philosophy or refers to central themes within his work as his "philosophy"; I have not found a robust account of his metaphilosophy—that is, his stance on philosophy itself. As such, there appears to be an opportunity to more fully characterize what the positive threads in Rancière's conception of philosophy might mean, particularly if one wants to apply such a conception to a topic like philosophy in schools.

To give an example of coverage of Rancière on philosophy in the secondary literature, Giuseppina Mecchia's "Philosophy and Its Poor: Rancière's Critique of Philosophy" recounts the general argument found in *The Philosopher and His Poor*. Further, Mecchia summarizes Rancière's critique of political philosophy that appears in his work *Disagreement: Politics and Philosophy*. Finally, Mecchia outlines Rancière's conceptual overlaps with the ideas of certain more contemporary philosophers, namely Lyotard and Agamben, before concluding her chapter with a summary of why Rancière disavows political philosophy (as demonstrated in his *Hatred of Democracy*). Her informative essay leaves me wanting to explore the positive suggestions about philosophy

made by Rancière, particularly because of my interest in bringing philosophy to schools. Indeed, Mecchia helps to show the kind of philosophy Rancière does *not* do, but if we want to *do* something with Rancière, this must be framed in the positive.[124]

In philosophy of education scholarship, in the edited volume on Rancière by Maarten Simons and Jan Masschelein, there is no listing in the index for philosophy – only "philosophy in teacher education."[125] Some philosophers of education have shown an appreciation for Rancière's positive characterization of philosophy insofar as he represents it as a means of challenging the boundaries of varying discourses, while others have casually alluded to his philosophy of education without specifying exactly what it entails. [126] In Bingham and Biesta's *Jacques Rancière* and in Tyson Lewis' *The Aesthetics of Education* there is no index listing for philosophy.[127] My intent is not to claim that

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124. With Mecchia, in the "Philosophy" section of *Jacques Rancière: Key Concepts,* edited by philosopher Jean-Philippe Deranty, we also find Deranty's chapter, "Logical Revolts," which summarizes Rancière's first works that challenged assumptions about who can be philosophical. Also included is "The Ignorant Schoolmaster: Knowledge and Authority," by Yves Citton, which describes *The Ignorant Schoolmaster* and some later works, illuminating some of the critiques and terminology that recur in Rancière's works. Citton refers explicitly to "Rancière's philosophy," noting several concepts which he argues are at the "core" of this philosophy. Citton, "The Ignorant Schoolmaster," 31.

125. Masschelein and Simons, "The Hatred of Public Schooling," 150-165.

126. Ruitenberg, "Distance and Defamiliarisation," 428; Pelletier,"Rancière's Critique of Bourdieu," 146; Pelletier, "Poetics," 270.

127. There also appears to be a lack of analysis of Rancière's discussion of the Principle of Veracity, which is one way that truth is categorized in *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*, the sole work in which the term is used. Neither "principle of veracity" nor "veracity" occur in the index of Simons and Masschelin, nor in Bingham and Biesta's book, *Jacques Rancière*, nor in Tyson Lewis' *Aesthetics of Education*. Lewis mentions in passing that there have been a few efforts to connect Rancière's 'philosophy of education' with specific concepts, but neither of the citations he mentions discuss explicitly

philosophy is completely absent from the scholarship on Rancière within philosophy of education, but rather to highlight an area where – given my intended application of this to a comparison with CPI – this reclamation project may be of service.

Having summarized the way in which this topic is covered more overtly outside of philosophy of education scholarship, I will now elaborate on the three concepts I present as alternatives to the three critiques I described in the previous section. This characterization will not be finely turned, with postulates and parameters; I am relying instead on a rough set of themes that seem pertinent to invoking Rancière in response to the question of why or how philosophy should be practiced in K-12 schools, and what that philosophy can or should entail. I approach this comparison by starting first with creativity and absence of a permanent site as a contrast to truth, moving on to assertion as a contrast to method, and finally, to egalitarianism contrasted with elitism.

Creativity and Absence of Site

Both creativity and an absence of site serve as alternatives to the problematic notion of truth that Rancière attributes to traditional philosophy. Steven Corcoran notes that for Rancière, philosophy may be viewed as a "creative practice" that disrupts, in an egalitarian fashion, "the prevailing categories governing perception and action."[128]

Rancière's philosophy of education, nor his conception of philosophy. Lewis, "Aesthetic Regime," 55-56. Lewis also refers to "Rancière's own educational philosophy" yet does not refer explicitly to any of Rancière's positive descriptions of philosophy itself. Lewis, "Realm of the Senses," 286.

128. Steven Corcoran. "Editor's Introduction." In Jacques Rancière's *Dissensus: On Politics and Aesthetics*, 1-26. Edited and translated by Steven Corcoran. New York: Bloomsbury, 2010, 4.

Contrary to a drive toward discovery of truth and acquisition of knowledge, we are looking here at a more creative, imaginary impulse that all people have.

Corcoran writes elsewhere that for Rancière, philosophy, just like politics or art, is "displaced with regard to any pre-established site."[129] For Rancière, there is no specific fixed site or grounding for politics, philosophy, nor for any of what we might call his positive ideals, because establishing a site *a priori* means essentializing and ontologizing – holding on to a "truth" as philosophers so wrongly do. Rancière writes:

> An egalitarian practice of philosophy, as I understand it, is a practice that enacts the aporia of foundation (…) I am aware that I am not the only person committed to this task. What is thus the specificity of my position? It is that I refuse to ontologize a principle of the aporia.[130]

In this passage, Rancière uses foundation and ontology as synonyms, each representing essentialism: a foundation is something that determines everything, giving everything built upon it particular constraints, while ontology is also understood as providing a foundation (for politics, ethics, and so on).[131] Aporia is used just as it is in Platonic texts, marking a paradox, conflict, or quandary, which ultimately serves to dismantle preconceived notions, disrupt certainty, and challenge the police order (as Rancière would call it).[132] If the foundation for everything – and of course this is being applied to the function of schooling

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129. Corcoran, "Editor's Introduction," 22.

130. Rancière, "The Thinking of Dissensus," 15.

131. Rancière, "The Thinking of Dissensus," 14.

132. Rancière, *Disagreement*, ix.

in determining where and how graduates can survive within society – is challenged, it means that there can be no natural hierarchy, no essence that we must answer to. Turning this challenging act into something that has a fixed method, a prescribed set of values to uncover (i.e. a drive toward truth), or a designated cohort of practitioners (i.e. professional philosophers) would 'ontologize this aporia' of philosophy.

Rancière values creativity and emergence rather than a grounded, foundational knowledge base. Philosophy moves and changes through time, rather than being an unmoving dialectical foundation, be it literal or figurative, of the sort he takes Plato to rely on. In an interview in which he was asked about the meaning of philosophy, Rancière said "I would describe philosophy as a place in motion."[133] Such a statement suggests, for example, that philosophy need not live within academia, but could travel – say, to K-12 schools, to the streets, to the corner store. Philosophy is not stuck, and thus must be present, alive, active, changing. Convergent with this depiction of philosophy itself as figuring transiently in space and time, Samuel Chambers writes that all of Rancière's work contains a "crucial temporal dimension."[134] Commentators such as Kristin Ross, Pelletier, Masschelein, and Simons have also focused on this temporal component of Rancière's work.[135] Rancière explicitly critiques a "certain temporality" that is implied in traditional

133. Rancière, "Our police order: what can be said, seen, and done: An Interview with Jacques Ranciere," *Le Monde diplomatique*, (Oslo) 8 November 2006.

134. Samuel Chambers, *The Lessons of Rancière* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 31.

135. Kristin Ross, "Historicizing Untimeliness," In Gabriel Rockhill and Philip Watts (eds.), *Jacques Rancière: History, Politics, Aesthetics* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009), 24; Rancière, "Dissenting Words," 123.

pedagogical logic, where the goal is for the student to make progress on a path.[136] He also explains his notion of a political 'moment' as 'intervening' in the more predetermined, sanctioned forms of government, in his preface to the book (a collection of his interviews) named precisely for this ideal, *Moments Politiques: Interventions 1977-2009*.[137] Within Rancière's alternative philosophical temporality, a "place in motion," we are not focused on a linear, fixed developmental pattern, but are instead nurturing emergence and presence. As such, and as we will see below, assertion as an alternative to a rigid method fits quite well.

Assertion

There are several authors from outside the philosophy of education field who have referred to Rancière's philosophical method or style. For example, Oliver Davis refers to Rancière's philosophical style as declarative or assertoric rather than explanatory.[138] While explanatory logic and the explanatory structure of schools were referenced in Chapter Two, this notion comes up again when conceiving of Rancière and philosophy generally. Explanatory acts, or acts of explication, involve those with prestige, 'intelligence', and authority allegedly distributing knowledge, thereby implicitly 'explaining' that the

136. Rancière, "On Ignorant Schoolmasters," 4.

137. Rancière, *Moments Politiques,* vii-xiii.

138. Oliver Davis, *Jacques Rancière*, ix, x.

distribution of social roles is due to a disparity of intelligences.[139] On the contrary, to assert is to include in all statements a kind of unspoken disclaimer that one ought to interpret such statements in light of a host of other considerations and that one ought not take such statements as an evaluation of the interlocutors.

Rancière suggests that we might consider a 'method of equality' to be a 'poetics of knowledges' or a 'politics of knowledge,' wherein we are vigilant about the power and arbitrariness of discursive thought; we can be skeptical about norms derived from alleged essentialist evidence, because all people are equal in their capacity to use language and meaning.[140] He writes,

> philosophy says to those knowledges [*savoir*] who are certain of their methods: methods are recounted stories. This does not mean that they are null and void. It means that they are weapons in a war; they are not tools which facilitate the examination of a territory but weapons which serve to establish its always uncertain boundary.[141]

The operative word here may in fact be 'certain.' In other words, Rancière is not claiming to be an authority, and in cases where he offers an evaluative judgment, he intends to hold his evaluation humbly. All statements should be admittedly contingent for a philosopher. Boundaries are relevant here as well. Rancière urges us to question claims pertaining to

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139. In the section of *The Ignorant Schoolmaster* in which he introduces the conception of explication, Rancière writes "explication is the myth of pedagogy," because traditional teaching and learning are predicated on the notion that the teacher has knowledge that needs to be explained or explicated for the student who lacks knowledge. *The Ignorant Schoolmaster,* 6.

140. Rancière, "Thinking Between Disciplines," 11-12; Pelletier, "Poetics," 273-274.

141. Rancière, "Thinking Between Disciplines," 11.

certain divisions between, say, academic disciplines, or conceptions of people. While at one time interdisciplinary work was more theoretical, there are now institutes that bring together ethicists and bioengineers. While at one time it was not a consideration at the institutional level, many colleges and universities now give special attention to First Generation students. Philosophy, for Rancière, happens in those moments where assertions are made – say, that being the first in your family to pursue a bachelor's degree poses unique challenges and fosters important perspectives, or that we ought to think about the moral impacts of gene splicing. These change the landscape of our lived and conceptual experience, and are crucial philosophically.

Assertions like this disrupt value schemas, challenging assumptions and practices reflective of the way the police order is parsed. When an assertion is made, for Rancière, it presupposes – though he does not use the language – an assumption of rights on behalf of the speaker. Assertions presuppose a capacity to understand, thus entailing the assumption of equality of intelligence Rancière promotes. Assertion is contrasted to method because it is not a simple negation of existing forms or norms; assertion is not predictable, nor contingent on existing binaries.

Egalitarianism

As should already be readily apparent, Rancière's critique of the field of philosophy challenges academics, himself included, to be skeptical about any of their claims to having a better understanding of things, via philosophical reasoning, than do

those in other professions.[142] He contends that philosophy inherently challenges any narratives that suggest that there is an inequality among intelligences: "what the philosopher declares (...) is that inequality is an artifice, a story which is imposed."[143] Removing adherence to essentialism (as he has done by advocating for creativity) is egalitarian insofar as it verifies that society itself is constructed through arbitrary roles. His insistence, once again, is that philosophers should not assume that equality is an end that can be achieved via the state or some alternative to it. Rather, equality is continually enacted through our assumptions.

To say that philosophy itself is egalitarian is to say that philosophy allows us to see through arbitrariness and to question conventions, constructs, and assumptions. To say that philosophy is egalitarian is to highlight that all participants are equally privy to this feature of reality. This empowers all and undermines any pretense that there are only certain people who can access truth. Replacing elitism with egalitarianism is a crucial component of Rancière's positive view of philosophy. He writes:

> Classically, philosophy has been considered a sort of super-discipline which reflects on the methods of the human and social sciences, or which provides them with their foundation. Thus a hierarchical order is established in the universe of discourse. Of course these sciences can object to this status, treat it as an illusion and pose itself as the true knowledge of philosophical illusion. This is another hierarchy, another way of putting discourses in their place. But there is a third way of proceeding, which seizes the moment in which the philosophical pretension to found the order of discourse is reversed, becoming the declaration, in the egalitarian language of the narrative, of the arbitrary nature of this order.[144]

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142. Hallward, "Subversion of Mastery," 28-29; Rancière, "Thinking Between Disciplines," 10.

143. Rancière, "Thinking Between Disciplines," 8.

144. Jacques Rancière, "Thinking Between The Disciplines," 10.

It is an ungrounding that philosophy fosters, but only when one assumes an equality of intelligences, when one recognizes the universal contingency of all discursive utterances. The way we speak about the world and organize into social roles could be otherwise, and indeed we have evidence of this when looking across history and at the present moment, observing our myriad languages and ways of life. For example, in some cultures, people with mental health conditions are scorned or left to fend for themselves, while in others they are deemed prophetic and wise, or are granted access to the health care that they need. Philosophy – in the third way that Rancière describes above, and which I refer to as the positive account – shows us that our attempts to attach our understanding of arbitrary social constructions to a concept of truth need to be challenged. In my reading, his work ultimately shows us that there is an assumption of some kind underlying everything, and that such assumptions betray a value system that can be more or less egalitarian.[145]

In academia there is often conversation about the importance of the humanities, and whether they are a kind of additive discipline that comes after the sciences, or whether science is informed by the humanities. Philosophers within this debate often zero in on philosophy as the driving force behind scientific discovery and application of scientific

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145. I appreciate this line of reasoning, in which we highlight the kind of assumption necessary for all things to operate. A similar argument, using the notion of faith, is found in Leo Tolstoy: "If a man lives he believes in something. If he did not believe that one must live for something, he would not live. If he does not see and recognize the illusory nature of the finite, he believes in the finite; if he understands the illusory nature of the finite, he must believe in the infinite. Without faith he cannot live." Leo Tolstoy, *A Confession*. Translated by Alymer Maude. New York: Dover (2005), 47.

breakthroughs (e.g. the morality behind robots replacing humans in the workforce). Rancière brackets this debate, arguing that philosophy should not position itself as authoritative. Instead, philosophy should be more modest, because it is fundamentally egalitarian, challenging hierarchies altogether.[146] Where you fall on the side of stipulating the power of philosophy or reason and what that entails may say more about your motives than any alleged truth of the matter.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have categorized Rancière's central critiques of philosophy as pertaining to elitism, method, and truth. His respective alternatives include egalitarianism, assertion, and creativity or sitelessness. Dissensus, as outlined in Chapter Two, is a helpful term for generally conceiving of the more positive act of philosophizing that emerges from Rancière's critiques and alternatives. Despite his resistance to grounding or locating philosophy, opting instead for an emergent or fluid conception, Rancière insists on a constant heterogeneity, a meeting of worlds.[147] This obtains regardless of philosophy, because it is a consequence of the equality of intelligence. However, philosophy points us to the fact that we are necessarily unable to reach consensus due to the barriers of perspective and place, confined as we are to our respective 'worlds.' Philosophy celebrates dissensus. As Rancière writes:

146. On the modesty that philosophy should adopt, see Rancière, *Disagreement,* 136.

147. On heterogeneity: Rancière "Against an Ebbing Tide," 246.

> it is possible to define a certain dissensual practice of philosophy as an activity of de-classification that undermines all policing of domains and formulas. It does so not for the sole pleasure of deconstructing the master's discourse, but in order to think the lines according to which boundaries and passages are constructed, according to which they are conceivable and modifiable. This critical practice of philosophy is an inseparably egalitarian, or anarchistic, practice, since it considers arguments, narratives, testimonies, investigations and metaphors all as the equal inventions of a common capacity in a common language. Engaging in critique of the instituted divisions, then, paves the way for renewing our interrogations into what we are able to think and do.[148]

This view of philosophy as a disruptive practice is Rancière's response to his worries about elitism, method, and truth. It is egalitarian rather than elitist, assertive rather than methodological, and rests on the creativity of each person rather than on an objective notion of truth. To consider how this could ever transpire in a school, given his issues with schooling as covered I in Chapter Two, I move in the next chapter to looking at a specific pedagogy that I argue aligns quite well with Rancière's critiques and positive conceptions of philosophy. In the following chapter I compare Rancière with the theory and practice of community of philosophical inquiry, in an attempt to find out if and how his practice of philosophy may can be relevant in schools, despite the inherent problems associated with schooling itself.

148. Rancière, *Dissensus,* 218.

CHAPTER FOUR

RANCIÈRE AND COMMUNITY OF PHILOSOPHICAL INQUIRY

In the preceding chapters I introduced Rancière's views on schooling and on philosophy, distinguishing between his critiques and his alternatives for each. Regarding schooling, we are left with a recognition of the inherent problems with schools but are encouraged to find ways that allow for the benefits of dissensus, whenever and wherever it occurs in schools. With respect to philosophy, we come away from the last chapter with reasons to be cautious of academic philosophy, but also to be hopeful that philosophy in schools can enhance or support dissensus.

I would now like to introduce community of philosophical inquiry (CPI) as one kind of dissensual, philosophical practice in schools, making the case that CPI is notably consistent with the critiques and norms surrounding schooling and philosophy that I have gleaned from Rancière. What I argue in this chapter is that Rancière's positive conception of philosophy both supports the efforts to introduce CPI into K-12 schools and cautions us against the idea that this will create perfect schools. Enacting Rancière's positive conception of philosophy in schools may not even be possible. Within the secondary literature on Rancière, there has yet to be work done on how his positive conception of philosophy can be applied to efforts to bring philosophy to schools. Within the secondary CPI literature there has yet to be an account of how Rancière's critiques of both schooling

and philosophy align with and may inform the principles and application of CPI. It is my hope that my efforts will contribute to each of these areas.[149]

In the "Schooling" section of this chapter I go over some ways that Rancière's views on schooling as covered in Chapter Two correspond with the critiques and solutions to schooling that are implied in or inherent to CPI. Moving on to the "Philosophy" section of this chapter, I offer a comparison between Rancière's views of traditional philosophy as described in Chapter Three and the critiques of philosophy and alternative norms implied or explicit in CPI. I do not organize these sections by the compartmentalization of terms I followed in Chapters Two and Three, which helped to lay the foundation for this comparison. Instead, much in the same manner as Rancière himself, I weave together themes and terms in order to convey one way in which the affinity between CPI and Rancière can be represented. This approach of thinking through the connections between CPI and Rancière also allows me to seamlessly introduce adjacent topics found within CPI that did not arise in the chapters strictly devoted Rancière, so as to set up for the following chapter, which thinks through applying Rancière and CPI to existing and new schools. Prior to delving into the two main sections of this chapter, I offer a gloss on exactly what CPI entails as well as some historical context for the practice.

149. It may go without saying, but Rancière himself has not written about CPI, and I would wager that he has not heard of it.

Context: The History and Practice of Community of Philosophical Inquiry

To give some context for this chapter, the CPI model I focus on was originally articulated by Matthew Lipman and Ann Margaret Sharp, and has been used in schools and programs within the U.S. for over forty years now.[150] It is a subset of the larger philosophy for/with children and philosophy in schools movement.[151] Though this chapter should make apparent why I have chosen this particular model as a kind of case study for thinking through Rancière's critiques and norms surrounding schooling and philosophy, I will still offer this disclaimer: there are many other arguments and practices within philosophy in schools that are worth considering in light of Rancière, but I am limiting my focus for the purpose of this dissertation. Many practitioners of philosophy in schools do great work without ever making use of the CPI model. There are entire schools that may indeed be attractive alternatives to traditional public schools, and that might fit with Rancière's

150. The history of the use of community of philosophical inquiry in schools is presented well in Maughn Rollins Gregory and David Granger, "Introduction: John Dewey on Philosophy and Childhood," *Education and Culture* 28, no. 2 (2012): 1-25. It should also be noted that Matthew Lipman credited Ann Margaret Sharp with "reconstructing the philosophical notion of community of inquiry into a model of educational practice." See Maughn Rollins Gregory and Megan Jane Laverty, 1-17 "Introduction" in *In Community of Inquiry with Ann Margaret Sharp*: Childhood, Philosophy and Education (New York: Routledge, 2018), 1.

151. As explained by Joanna Haynes and Karin Murris, the original reason that a distinction was made between philosophy "for" and philosophy "with" children was because when Karin Murris developed a new way of using picture books as prompts for philosophy in elementary schools, Lipman asked her to distinguish it from the method he was already writing about. See Joanna Haynes and Karin Murris, "An Epistemological Shift in Teacher Education through Philosophy with Children." In *Philosophy for Children in Transition: Problems and Prospects*, 117-136. Edited by Nancy Vansieleghem and David Kennedy. Walden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012, 132.

critiques and norms, but that do not make use of any notion of philosophy in their structure nor pedagogy. There are also philosophers who offer critiques of philosophy akin to Rancière's, who again, for the purposes of this specific project, I am not exploring. In sum, the focus on Rancière and CPI is a way to zero in on some of my own questions about philosophy and schools, and in no way is meant to discredit others who have considered or applied similar ideas in different contexts. I am not arguing that CPI is the only logical application of Rancière's views in the context of schooling.

CPI is a central practice for many facilitators of philosophy for children, or those who bring philosophy to K-12 schools.[152] The practice can be applied at the college or university level as well, but I am looking at the K-12 level because in the U.S. this level of schooling is compulsory, making it problematic from the Rancièrian perspective.[153] The method follows core elements as rearticulated by Lipman and summarized by Gregory as such: a text is shared; students raise questions generated by the reading of this text and plan the order in which to collectively go about trying to answering them; students engage

152. Regarding the centrality of community of philosophical inquiry in philosophy for children implementation see Maughn Rollins Gregory, "Precollege Philosophy Education: What Can It Be? The IAPC Model," in *Philosophy in Schools, An Introduction for Philosophers and Teachers*, 69-85. Edited by Sara Goering, Nicholas J. Shudak, and Thomas E. Wartenberg. New York: Routledge, 2013, 73.

153. For an example of how community of philosophical inquiry can be implemented and assessed at the college or university level see Maughn Rollins Gregory and Megan Jane Laverty, "Evaluating Classroom Dialogue: Reconciling internal and external accountability," in *Theory and Research in Education* 5, no. 3 (2007): 281-310. I also had the opportunity to implement the practice in three undergraduate philosophy classes I taught at Hofstra University in 2015, and was able to share reflections on the experience as part of the 2017 American Philosophical Association Teaching Hub.

in a CPI dialogue on the questions; the facilitator introduces activities that revolve around the relevant philosophical topics; and finally, there is some form of reflection on the practice.[154] While there are variations of how CPI is used, the model I am working with here is based on what I learned while attending the Montclair State University Institute for the Advancement of Philosophy for Children 2013 Summer Residential Workshop.[155]

When formulating the questions at the start of the inquiry session, there is typically quite a bit of work on the part of the facilitator to help ensure that the questions are sufficiently philosophical. To give an example, the class might read a story about a woman who decided to protest outside of a factory farm. A student could pose a question like "did the farm owner know her before she decided to protest?" This would be an empirical question, and one that either could not be answered within the circle, or one that could simply be answered by gathering more facts; this would not be a philosophical question.

A philosophical question – the only kind a CPI should try to answer – is one that members can disagree about, and can try to answer within the circle without relying on experts, and is not empirical. In the *Handbook*, James Heinegg relays Joe Oyler's four common kinds of philosophical questions: they are questions about meaning, questions about right and wrong, questions about how we can know things, and questions about reality.[156] Questions like these embody underlying philosophical concepts that Laurance

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154. Gregory, "Precollege Philosophy Education," 72.

155. Maughn Rollins Gregory, *Philosophy for Children Practitioner Handbook.* Montclair: Institute for the Advancement of Philosophy for Children, 2008, 11-12; 47.

156. James Heinegg, "Introduction," in *Philosophy for Children Practitioner Handbook.* Montclair: Institute for the Advancement of Philosophy for Children, 2008, 88.

Splitter and Ann Sharp characterize as being common to the experiences of all inquirers, central to how we understand our experiences, and contestable in terms of how we define them.[157] If we are to return to the example involving the story of the woman protesting the factory farm, the group might instead formulate a question like "are there conditions that make killing morally acceptable?" The group might thus need to grapple with the concept of morality during their inquiry session.

One aspect of starting a CPI session that often takes some time is the selection of the question or questions that the group should attempt to answer. Gregory's summary of CPI protocol mentions that students plan the order in which they would like to try to answer various questions. What this entails is writing the proposed questions on the board and voting on which question students are most interested in, generating relevant sub-questions of the chosen question as needed. Generally speaking, the questions need to be crystalized down to their philosophical core before they are all voted on, but it can be done in the opposite order as well. As such, sometimes the voting takes time, but clarifying the question that was voted on takes even longer. The process, rather than expedient results, products, or answers is key here.[158]

As made apparent in the previous chapter, Rancière may not be comfortable with formalizing any kind of method. As such, insisting on certain conditions, such as the formation of philosophical questions, might seem too methodological. Structurally

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157. Laurance Splitter and Ann Margaret Sharp, *Teaching for Better Thinking: The Classroom Community of Inquiry* (Melbourne: ACER, 1995), 130.

158. This is notably what would traditionally be referred to as a very democratic practice.

democratic practices should also be viewed with a suspicious eye, according to Rancière, though it is not apparent that he would object to mere voting on a question with a K-12 classroom. I will weave my responses to some such worries throughout this chapter. Having given a general overview of CPI, I now move on to some critiques and norms surrounding schooling, found within the practice of CPI in order to consider in more detail how these correspond with those of Rancière.

Schooling

This section addresses the key educational themes I covered in Chapter Two. As a reminder, there I described Rancière's critiques of inequality and stultification, showing how these inspire his normative assumption of equality of intelligence. Also, I described Rancière's critiques of truth and explanation, contrasted with his norm of the belief in the separation between language and truth. Finally, I described his critique of progress, contrasted with the value of dissensus. In this section my goal is to suggest ways in which CPI is sympathetic to these critiques and norms of schooling.

Inequality and stultification are of concern to both Rancière and proponents of CPI, although the latter do not use either term. As covered in Chapter Two, we can distinguish between schooling on the one hand and education, or learning, on the other. In Rancière's terminology, education is seen as something positive, while schooling is problematic.[159] Education and learning appear to be exempt from the radical suspicion with which

159. Bingham, "Settling No Conflict;" Mercieca, "Initiating," 410; Mercieca and Mercieca, "How Early," 852-853; Säfström, "Rethinking," 207-208.

Rancière argues we should regard schools, which are institutions designed to recognize and sort intelligence and capacity. Rancière poses us with the challenge, as Caroline Pelletier writes, "to suspend the whole system of recognition, and the perverse satisfaction that it affords."[160] Again, Rancière condemns those who intend to use schools to produce equality, much in the same way that he condemns those philosophers who propose that they can order society with their knowledge. Rancière does not believe that any social institutions can legitimately produce harmony or consensus. Indeed, such an occurrence would be troubling from Rancière's perspective. The social order that schools, formal government, and all institutions comprise, is based on what Rancière refers to "sheer contingency."[161] All social roles could be otherwise, but we have decided on these hierarchies and specializations to function as a society. It is key for Rancière that all hierarchies are only possible because of an "ultimate anarchy" on which they all rest; all social roles are possible only because there is a primordial equality that exists among all humans.[162]

CPI directly challenges the hierarchy and inequality in a traditional classroom, where the teacher has knowledge and must find out which of her students are also knowledgeable.[163] By making the development of questions a group activity with no

160. Pelletier, "No Time," 113.

161. Rancière, *Disagreement,* 16.

162. Rancière, *Disagreement,* 16.

163. Laurance J. Splitter, "Educational Reform through Philosophy for Children," *Thinking: The Journal of Philosophy for Children* 7, no. 2, 34.

specific outcome or educative endgame, CPI is less about assessing individual students and more about the egalitarian assessment of the community itself. This is a different kind of paradigm from schooling where students are individually evaluated based on their apprehension of certain bits of knowledge. A facilitator in an inquiry session does not explain concepts to students but joins in reasoning them through with the group; she need not be an expert.[164] Indeed, the facilitator is often simply following and commenting on the dynamics of the collective dialogue, rather than engaging with content.[165] As such, CPI avoids explanation and its consequent stultification.

We might say that there is the requirement that every participant understand the different dialogical moves or the parameters of the inquiry; as such, there is some initial explanation of these moves and parameters that takes place. However, there is a built-in dimension whereby CPI forecloses on the possibility of stultification: the goal is always for the students themselves to be able to self-facilitate, either simply by being or becoming metacognitively self-aware as an inquiring group such that no individual facilitator is needed, or by having individual students take turns as facilitator. As Thomas Jackson explains, "in a mature community, the teacher/facilitator will be a coequal facilitator/participant," because each member of the community will naturally use the

164. Splitter, "Educational Reform," 50-51.

165. Megan Laverty, "Dialogue as philosophical inquiry in the teaching of tolerance and sympathy," *Learning Inquiry* 1, no. 2 (2007): 128.

protocols of dialogue within the community.[166] Analogously to the ignorant schoolmaster for Rancière, some argue that the CPI facilitator is meant to be self-effacing, purposely distancing herself from traditional teacher authority and instead present as an inquirer among inquirers (her students).[167] Rancière's critique of inequality and stultification are in line with CPI's avoidance of a traditional teacher authority and the typical emphasis on atomic individuals as retainers of knowledge.

The focus on a common text is a practice in both a CPI and in the practice called universal teaching that Rancière uses as an examplary model in the *Ignorant Schoolmaster*.[168] For CPI and universal teaching, the common text is meant to be a starting-off point for something other than transmission. While the facilitator in a CPI does not necessarily draw the class back to the common text, she will direct the group back to the original question of concern in the moment if necessary (it is perfectly acceptable for

166. Thomas Jackson, "Philosophical Rules of Engagement," in *Philosophy in Schools: An Introduction for Philosophers and Teachers,* 99-109. Edited by Sara Goering, Nicholas J. Shudak, and Thomas E. Wartenberg (New York: Routledge, 2013), 108.

167. Haynes and Murris, "Wrong Message," 3, and David Kennedy, "Practicing philosophy of childhood: Teaching in the (r)evolutionary mode," *Journal of Philosophy of Schools* 2, no. 1 (2015): 6, 9-10, 15-16.

168. In *The Ignorant Schoolmaster* Rancière called Jacotot's pedagogy universal teaching. Since in this chapter we are looking at the more theoretical underpinnings of Rancière's take on schooling as it aligns with CPI, it is not important to differentiate between Rancière and Jacotot.

an inquiry to end up as a pursuit of unforeseen concepts or questions generated once the attempt at answering the original question is underway.)[169]

The common text is meant to be a shared ground.[170] Just as is stipulated for a CPI stimulus, an emancipatory experience under universal teaching requires that one is not told how to interpret a text.[171] Pedagogically, the shared text in both universal teaching and CPI displaces the traditional hierarchy associated with knowledge. The hierarchies here are slightly different because universal teaching treats knowledge as something of an object that we can still somewhat apprehend, with the dangerous hierarchy being that between student and teacher where the teacher is assumed to have the knowledge. A CPI also challenges the notion that the teacher has the knowledge, but it is further contesting knowledge itself, treating it the public *process* rather than the *result* as the most objective thing (i.e. the object of knowledge).[172]

169. There are whole articles about the details of the process of inquiry, the importance (or not) of returning to the original text or question, and more. However, for the sake of this project, I am offering a gloss of the issue.

170. On the importance that these shared texts be relevant to the communities in which they are used -- which highlights the need for CPI to be a truly shared experience -- see Lena Greene, "Education for Democracy: Using the Classroom Community of Philosophical Inquiry to Develop Habits of Reflective Judgment in South African Schools," *Thinking Skills and Creativity* 4 (2009): 178–184.

171. Ruitenberg, "Art, Politics," 220, 222.

172. Haynes and Murris, "Wrong Message," 8.

The Rancièrian assumption of equality of intelligence is more or less consistent with principles of CPI.[173] The very structure of a CPI involves all community participants in the active search for answers, development of questions, and reflection. As Nadia and David Kennedy put it, CPI entails distributed intelligence and distributed agency, whereby there is no locus of either, but they are equal among all parties.[174] David Kennedy elsewhere writes that "in the event of philosophy, life and language take on a new, problematic relationship, and the aporias it invokes give intimations of an ungraspable whole."[175] Members of the community are de facto valuable, with valuable perspectives and lines of reasoning that can contribute to collective knowledge – assuming that there is no breach in the expectations of community life. If a CPI session is practiced in the ideal way, all students are equal – even with the teacher.[176] An ignorant schoolmaster assumes

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173. An allusion to this can be found in Matt Charles, "Philosophy for children," *Radical Philosophy* 170 (2011): 36-45; 43.

174. David Kennedy and Nadia Kennedy, "Community of Philosophical Inquiry as a Discursive Structure, and its Role in School Curriculum Design," *Journal of Philosophy of Education* 45, no. 2 (2011): 269. David Kennedy further describes the distribution of control in CPI in David Kennedy, "The Role of a Facilitator in a Community of Philosophical Inquiry," *Metaphilosophy* 35, no. 5 (2004): 756-761.

175. David Kennedy, "Fools, Young Children and Philosophy," in *Thinking: The Journal of Philosophy for Children* 8, no. 4: 2-6; 5.

176. Equal distribution of power of course ultimately rests on the teacher being able to relinquish power – as pointed out in Gilbert Burgh and Mor Yorshansky. "Communities of Inquiry: Politics, power and group Dynamics." *Educational Philosophy and Theory* 43, no. 5 (2011): 436-452. It has been noted by Nathan Brubaker that equality in a community of philosophical inquiry is somewhat of an ideal and has not necessarily been shown empirically. That being said, teachers who engage in this practice "foster a pedagogical vision that is fundamentally democratic, equitable, and nurturing." See Nathan Brubaker, "Negotiating authority through cultivating a classroom community of Inquiry." *Teaching and Teacher Education* 28 (2012): 240-250. Quote is on page 248. It should also

equality and guides her students with her will through the space of possibility rather than toward a set end or value.[177] Not only is this type of improvisation supported by CPI scholarship, but it has also been argued that such communities can thereby protect against "the power of official knowledge" and can thus liberalize the curriculum.[178]

Both Rancière and CPI assume in a broad sense that everyone equally has a connection to truth – that no one has a special relationship to truth, correctness, or legitimacy, but that we each have a will that is a source of both individual and collective strength. CPI advocates do not necessarily agree on whether truth is or should be the goal in inquiry or in life, nor do they agree on whether truth exists. The implication of engaging in dialogue as the means of answering questions is that participants have a role in the process, rather than merely following the procedure of seeking answers via consultation with experts. There is value in the process itself. As Karel L. van der Leeuw writes, "Philosophical dialogue is a specific attempt to live in a common reality with other rational

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be noted that there is excellent critique about whether or not literature and programming around community of philosophical inquiry does a good job of contributing to an equal society overall, particularly with respect to the lack of diversity in the authors of stimulus material for inquiry sessions; there is concern that practitioners are operating in a kind of gated community of white privilege. This critique can be found in Darren Chetty, "The Elephant in the Room: Picturebooks, Philosophy for Children and Racism." *childhood & philosophy* 10, no. 19 (2014): 11-31.

177. Rancière, "The Emancipated Spectator," 277; Lewis, "Aesthetic Regime," 63.

178. Walter Omar Kohan, Marina Santi and Jason Thomas Wozniak. "Philosophy for teachers: between ignorance, invention and improvisation." In *The Routledge International Handbook of Philosophy for Children*, 253-259. Edited by Maughn Rollins Gregory, Joanna Haynes and Karin Murris (New York: Routledge, 2017), 257.

beings; it is a practice that serves no other purpose."[179] The explicator tries to reason about the will, quantify it, qualify it, and order it – perhaps in desire for certainty and control. For Rancière, it is precisely at that point where we must be wary, and where we need to trust in that which we cannot control.[180] Indeed, by placing trust in students to use their capacities to decide what they want to think and how they want to think it, we may be pleasantly surprised by the emergence of previously unimagined ways of being.[181]

This same kind of trust is invoked in the principle of following the inquiry where it leads within CPI, and by incorporating relevant perspectives from the group. For example, any group member can introduce a counter example from their own lives, or dispute the importance of a question based on whether or not it feels important to them. Lipman argues that when facilitators draw on their own experience or the experiences of the students, this contributes to overall peace in the larger community.[182] The dialogue may cause some unease, some disequilibrium, as statements and questions are problematized and challenged.[183] Nonetheless, we can trust in the process of dialogue.

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179. Karel L. van der Leeuw: "Philosophical Dialogue and the Search for Truth" in *Thinking: the Journal of Philosophy for Children* 17, no. 3 (2005), 23.

180. As Rancière writes, when referring to his more normative conception of democracy rather than the formal type he critiques, "the test of democracy must ever be in democracy's own image: versatile, sporadic – and founded on trust." Rancière, *On the Shores of Politics*, 61.

181. Yusef Waghid and Nuraan Davids "On the (Im)possibility of Democratic Citizenship Education in the Arab and Muslim World," *Studies in Philosophy and Education* (2014): 351.

182. Matthew Lipman, *Thinking in Education, 2nd Edition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 108-109.

183. Lipman, *Thinking in Education*, 87.

Recognizing multiple perspectives in a CPI is very important, but this should not be mistaken for relativism, for the objectivity of this relational pedagogy lies in a necessary joint recognition of one's biases and perspectival limitations, as well as a desire to grapple with ambiguities.[184] This notion of relational pedagogy has some similarity to Rancière's notion of *veracity*, wherein we all have truth within us that cannot directly be expressed through language. We reason together when we try to make ourselves (and our 'truths') understood. Rancière writes:

> Reason begins when discourses organized with the goal of being right cease, begins where equality is recognized: not an equality decreed by law or force, not a passively received equality, but an equality in act, verified, at each step by those marchers who, in their constant attention to themselves and in their endless revolving around the truth, find the right sentences to make themselves understood by others.[185]

The truth described here is not something that is outside and able to be found or discovered, and it is not something that can finally be articulated if only it is described or defined in the right way. In fact, such a notion of truth could allow for someone to be "right," when for Rancière, it is unreasonable to even have such a goal. Discourse, for

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184. Vivien Linington, Lorayne Excelle, and Karin Murris, "Education For Participatory Democracy: A Grade R Perspective," *Perspectives In Education* 29, no. 1 (2011): 36-45, 40-41; Haynes and Murris, "Wrong Message," 7; Megan Laverty, "Dialogue as philosophical inquiry in the teaching of tolerance and sympathy," *Learning Inquiry* 1, no. 2 (2007): 125; Nadia Kennedy and David Kennedy , "Community of Philosophical Inquiry as a Discursive Structure, and its Role in School Curriculum Design," *Journal of Philosophy of Education* 45, no. 2 (2011): 269.

185. Rancière, *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*, 72.

Rancière and for CPI, is productive to the extent that it respects what we share as well as our inherent difference. Megan Laverty describes this seeming paradox:

> Dialogical philosophical inquiry is premised on a condition of universal human sameness. It is constituted in the recognition that individuals are defined in relationship to their ongoing engagement with concepts, as conditions for the possibility of meaning. (…) Dialogical philosophical inquiry is also premised on our irrevocable differences, the contingent and significant nature of these differences, and our failure to communicate effectively. We rely on one another to verify our conceptual understanding, and yet, the possibilities for such a conceptual understanding rely on our responsiveness to others in our relationships with them.[186]

We each have our own perspective and relation to the truth. Our ability to discourse or reason together is predicated on there being a limitation to what we can jointly determine to be right or true. In a CPI we can surely disregard invalid inferences, unclear definitions, and so on, but there will never be a conclusion reached that entirely discounts the felt experience or perspective of one or more community members.[187]

Rancière encourages teachers not to assert possession of knowledge, but instead to be authority figures that direct students down the path of exercising their own pre-existing

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186. Megan Laverty, "Dialogue as philosophical inquiry in the teaching of tolerance and sympathy," *Learning Inquiry* 1 (2007): 125–132; 131.

187. As David Kennedy points out, Charles S. Peirce suggests that truth is infinitely deferred insofar as it is what the community eventually (if ever) decides on. It is to Peirce that we owe the original notion of community of inquiry. David Kennedy, "Philosophy for Children and the Reconstruction of Philosophy." *Metaphilosophy 30*, no. 4 (1999): 344. Kennedy cites Charles S. Peirce. "Critical Review of Berkeley's Idealism." In *Selected Writings*, edited by P. P. Wiener. New York: Dover (1958): 81-83. For a description of Peirce on community of inquiry see Michael J. Pardales and Mark Girod, "Community of philosophical inquiry: Its Past And Present Future," *Educational Philosophy & Theory* 38, no. 3 (2006): 299-309.

capacities, or their will.[188] Universal teaching involves, as Lewis puts it, a shift from intelligence to will, and certainly requires seeing a distinction between intelligence and will.[189] There is no predestined object of knowledge that must be willed; it is the recognition of will itself. In this way, an ignorant schoolmaster can "teach" what they do not know, encouraging their students to make an effort toward their goals. An example of this that ought to be relatable for all parents is helping your child do their homework: you do not need to know the content to encourage your child, check that they are on task, assess whether they are engaged with what they have done, and so on. Interestingly, employers do the same thing by having employees report on their progress on some technical aspect of their jobs that the bosses would not themselves know how to do. With Rancière, this is getting at the fact that knowledge of the content has little to do with the relationship of one will to another. A CPI facilitator, as mentioned previously, is "self-effacing": she/he will not necessarily contribute content, but instead remark on connections being made, definitions that are being formed, etc. The facilitator helps with form, not content, encouraging the will of her/his students.

Another commonality between Rancière's work and that of some CPI scholars is evidenced by their respective discussions of progress and development. For Rancière,

188. Biesta and Bingham, *Jacques Rancière*, 47; Nancy Vanseileghem, "Philosophy with Children as an Exercise in *Parrhesia*: An Account of a Philosophical Experiment with Children in Cambodia." *Journal of Philosophy of Education* 45 (2011); Hallward, "Subversion of Mastery," 27-28.

189. Lewis, *Aesthetics of Education*, 16; Ruitenberg, "Art, Politics," 221; Kohan, "Childhood," 351.

when schools operate under the pretense of helping people achieve academically despite alleged "intellectual deficiencies," schools only further contribute to the idea that learning is contingent on recognition of inferiority and subsequent growth, development, or progress.[190] Further, having pre-determined ends for a school ignores the ambiguity and uncertainty of its potential; allowing participants to truly get something meaningful out of school requires room for their uniqueness.[191] Just as Rancière critiques pedagogies that assume a linear development model, wherein progress and development are explained by the people and the institutions with the alleged knowledge, so too do CPI practitioners possess skepticism toward pedagogies that treat children as adults in training.[192] Linear pedagogy itself presupposes an ending or at least a trajectory.

A number of authors within the CPI literature have argued for the incongruity of CPI principles and schooling, and have emphasized the difficulty of accommodating the current demand for accountability through standardized performance metrics in schools.[193]

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190. Mercieca and Mercieca, "How Early Is Early?," 849.

191. This interest in making space for children to be themselves in schools, and a consideration of how a community of philosophical inquiry facilitator best allows this, is found in David Kennedy's article, "Practicing philosophy of childhood: Teaching in the (r)evolutionary mode," *Journal of Philosophy of Schools* 2, no. 1.

192. Vivien Lingington, Lorayne Excelle, and Karin Murris, "Education For Participatory Democracy: A Grade R Perspective," *Perspectives In Education* 29, no.1 (2011): 36-45, 39-40; Haynes and Murris, "Wrong Message," 10.

193. See, for example, Jana Mohr Lone, "Does Philosophy for Children Belong in School at All?" *Analytic Teaching* 21, no. 2 (2014): 155; Vangsieleghem and Kennedy, "Introduction: What is Philosophy for Children?" in *Philosophy for Children in Transition,* 8; Deanna Kuhn, Nicole Zillmer, and Valerie Khait, "Can Philosophy Find a Place in the K-12 Curriculum?" in *Philosophy in Schools,* 257-265; Pardales and Girod, "Community of philosophical inquiry," 304.

Standardization and assessment of public schools are literal examples of the police order. However, as radical as CPI is, I conjecture that Rancière would still say it is part of the police order. [194] Shared concepts, shared measurements, and all roles that exist in a social institution and in social interactions are predicated on arbitrary, ends-based social constructions. Our relationship to the truth and our inherent value and intelligence, which we all possess equally, should be recognized as separate from anything we determine socially.

In arguing for a critical philosophy of childhood as a component of CPI in elementary schools, Walter Kohan has written about the ability for philosophy with children to indeed help call into question the very distinction between children and adults, thus problematizing the police order in which "child" and "adult" are constructed.[195] On this account, Rancière and CPI are thus in agreement that philosophy can play a role in destabilizing the social roles inherent and implied in schools.

Rancière refers to school as an ambiguous form that contains a mingling of meanings dependent on each participant's vision for the school and its function.[196] The school is thus:

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194. For examples of references to community of philosophical inquiry as radical, see Burgh and Yorshansky, "Communities of Inquiry," 443 and Arie Kizel, "From laboratory to praxis: Communities of philosophical inquiry as a model of (and for) social activism," *childhood and philosophy* 12, no. 25 (2016): 497-517.

195. Walter Kohan, "What Can Philosophy and Children Offer Each Other," Thinking: The Journal of Philosophy for Children, vol 14 no 4, 2-8; 4

196. Rancière, *On the Shores of Politics,* 55.

> the site of permanent negotiation of equality between the democratic state and the democratic individual: a manifold negotiation which, to unequal and often contradictory expectations, offers gains and losses which are infinitely more complex than those conceived of by the analysis of educational 'failure.'[197]

The school as a form of gathering, is a break from the production of everyday life, yet this kind of break only functions as such for those who have the affluence and the desire to treat it as such. School is not solely for leisure, nor is its activity detached from survival but is a site of "permanent negotiation" among participants.[198] This notion of negotiation is reminiscent of the general idea of democracy, which is certainly prevalent as an ideal among CPI advocates. Rancière makes strong critiques of democracy as an institutional practice, arguing that real democracy happens when previously accepted ways of being, speaking, thinking, etc., are disrupted.

While some CPI practitioners see inquirers as becoming better participants of formal democracy, Rancière critiques formal democracy in favor of total, though impermanent, disruption to the *form* of democracy/politics – disruption which he argues is *actual* democracy/politics.[199] For Rancière, this is dissensus – it is what philosophy ought to be. Along the same lines, some scholars argue that CPI supports the moral and civic development of children, and most would agree that CPI helps students to develop into

197. Rancière, *On the Shores of Politics*, 55.

198. Rancière, *On the Shores of Politics*, 54-55.

199. For Rancière on politics pertaining to social roles see the whole of *Disagreement* and particularly pages 16 and 29.

better thinkers, but these are notions of which Rancière is highly critical.[200] Granted, CPI theorists seem to have a range of meanings when they refer to the democratic benefits of introducing K-12 students to philosophy through CPI.[201] It should also be noted that there are cases where CPI proponents explicitly challenge the idealization of democracy and democratic practices within the field.[202] Indeed, one such figure, Walter Kohan, shares with Rancière this very insistence that philosophy is a kind of dissensus or interval, and that it ought not to have aims like 'contributing to democracy.' He writes:

> When philosophy is the official voice of a politics or a morality – whether aristocratic or democratic, liberal or authoritarian – it loses its subversive and transformative power. Moreover, when any morality, politics, or religion is set up as a purpose of philosophy, philosophy itself becomes impossible. If philosophy is possible at all, it is because morality, politics, religion constitute an empty space, an interrogation, an interval.[203]

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200. For reference to moral development of children and creation of democratic citizens, see Green, "Education for Democracy," 179 and 183. For depictions of community of philosophical inquiry as being a method to help to develop better thinkers, see for example Gregory and Granger, "Introduction: John Dewey on Philosophy and Childhood," 10; Matthew Lipman, *Philosophy in the Classroom, 2nd Edition.* Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1980), 12-16 (for example, "They (children) must be taught to think and, in particular, to think for themselves," 13.

201. Haynes and Murris describe participatory democracy as pre-supposing non-dualist epistemologies that imply that every participant is partial, pointing out that compulsory schooling itself is not democratic. See Haynes and Murris, "Epistemological Shift," 118-120. David Kennedy describes "democracy as social practice" and allows for this practice to deconstruct any impulse within schools to reproduce the state's economic, political, and hegemonic practices. See David Kennedy, "The Role of a Facilitator in a Community of Philosophical Inquiry," *Metaphilosophy* 35 no. 5 (2004): 763.

202. Walter Kohan, "The Origin, Nature and Aim of Philosophy in Relation to Philosophy for Children," *Thinking: The Journal of Philosophy for Children* 12 no 2, 25-30; 25-26.

203. Walter Kohan, "Education, Philosophy and Childhood: The Need to Think an Encounter," *Thinking: The Journal of Philosophy for Children* 16 no. 1, 4-11; 11

Alas, there is a divergence between those within CPI who advocate for this kind of subversive nature of philosophy, and those who argue for its democratizing effects.[204] For the purposes of my project, I will not attempt to parse out what these nuanced differences are, for it seems that such a project, while very worthwhile, would be a large undertaking in itself.[205] In general, I can assert that I side with those advocates of CPI who value nonlinear movement through dialogue, emphasizing emergent properties and the process itself rather than any outcome that is useful for participation in society at large.[206] For example, Kennedy and Kennedy refer to CPI as a dynamic discursive structure that is never completed and that "could be described as a non-linear, self-organizing communication and argumentation system that presents itself as linear."[207]

Insofar as I share Rancière's critiques of democracy as an institution or formal process, my perspective appears to be in the minority here. Even though I believe, for example, that symbolic and informal logic are invaluable for students to learn, making it easier for them to detect faulty argumentation emanating from the media and authority figures, and even though I do believe that by participating in CPI students can become

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204. For a further example of the use of the subversive terminology see Kennedy "Fools, Young Children and Philosophy," 5, and Kohan, "The Origin," 28.

205. Indeed, there are excellent pieces that explore the topic. For example, see Burgh and Yorshansky, "Communities," 436-452.

206. Haynes and Murris, "Epistemological Shift," 123-124; David Kennedy, "The Role of a Facilitator in a Community of Philosophical Inquiry," *Metaphilosophy* 35 no. 5 (2004), 754.

207. Kennedy and Kennedy, "Community of Philosophical Inquiry," 100 -101.

more empathic, better listeners, and so on, I do not register the value of these things in terms of their applicability to democracy. I may be willing to make this kind of argument for pragmatic purposes, but in my view, understanding CPI in terms of its contribution to democracy presupposes too much about democracy that could potentially discount or contradict the very assumptions within Rancière's system that I affirm.

To explain this in slightly different terms, what draws me to the values shared by Rancière and CPI is more in the realm of universal ethical or metaphysical beliefs about the world and others, than in the realm of pragmatic beliefs about contemporary issues. The important takeaway for now from my coverage of the topic of schooling in relation to democracy for CPI and for Rancière is that there is not full agreement. It is hard to know whether CPI advocates mention the democratic payoffs of the practice in all cases because they believe democracy is a primary good, or because it is merely useful in demonstrating the value of CPI. Hence, this topic will come up elsewhere in this dissertation when I consider the justifications for CPI that are necessary when soliciting buy-in from schools.

Returning to the project of reviewing similarities, Lipman distinguishes between schooling and education in order to contrast convention and conformity with the practice of good judgment. Good judgment, he argues, is nurtured within a CPI session, which he argues are more often *contrary* to any consensus.[208] This aligns with Rancière's notion of dissensus. Indeed, Karin Murris has suggested that CPI is beneficial because it uses prompts that challenge norms and social mores, and urges students to move beyond

208. Lipman, *Thinking in Education,* 47.

political correctness and to say what they really think.[209] Communities of philosophical inquiry, she argues, following Biesta's work on Rancière, thrive on dissensus, not consensus.[210]

To give an example of what we might call dissensus in a CPI, I will draw from a dialogue excerpt from Nathan Brubaker, recorded when he was facilitating in a fifth grade classroom. Students were discussing whether the purpose of going to school is to learn to think. They were agreeing with one another that you go to school and learn from others what types of things are wrong because they repeat it to you over and over. One student disagreed, and changed the example they were using to discuss the topic:

> *Thelma:* Well I kind of disagree with Aruba when she said that if more and more people keep telling you that this is right then you're going to, then eventually you're going to come to the decision that everyone else is right and you're wrong.
>
> *Nathan:* Because then you'd have an answer.
>
> *Voice:* What?
>
> *Voice:* Like…
>
> *Nathan:* If everyone, if everyone told you this is what's right, this is what's right…
>
> *Thelma:* Then…
>
> *Nathan:* …that would give you an answer.
>
> *Thelma:* No, but if you, okay, I'm going to change Clifford's example…[211]

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209. Karin Murris, "Corporal Punishment And The Pain Provoked By The Community Of Enquiry Pedagogy In The University Classroom." *Africa Education Review* 11, no. 2 (2014): 228; Murris and Haynes, "Wrong Message."

210. Karin Murris, "Corporal Punishment," 225, 230.

211. Nathan Brubaker, "Notes from the Field: Why do people go to school?" in *Thinking: The Journal of Philosophy for Children,* 2006, vol. 18, no. 1, 47-50; 48.

In this example, Thelma not only disagreed with her classmates but was dissatisfied with the inference that the facilitator was drawing from her statements. She held out in order to get her point across, willing to disagree with her teacher and classmates, and insisting that the example be changed. Later in the dialogue she was able to restate her initial position slightly differently:

> I'm just saying that if, if fifty thousand people tell you that something is, that guns are good, that you're not necessarily going to believe them just because fifty thousand people tell you that you're wrong. It's, I'm trying to tell Aruba that I don't think that the more people that tell you you're wrong, that you're going to believe them.[212]

Ironically, this dialogue literally dealt with the topic of consensus, and it is refreshing to see that Thelma had an objection to the alleged inherent value of consensus. However, the example is also helpful because Thelma demonstrated dissensus by disagreeing and insisting on a new example. With Joanna Haynes, Murris states that CPI pedagogy:

> thrives on dissensus and disagreement as it enables opinions to be put to the test (…) guided by experienced facilitators who need to be able to have the courage to be moved and changed by what happens in a community with others who are different from them.[213]

As argued here, CPI thus assumes an equality of intelligence, acknowledges a separation between language and truth, and values dissensus. Having covered the many ways in which CPI aligns with Rancière on schooling, let us now look at some conceptions of philosophy that can be attributed to proponents of CPI.

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212. Brubaker, Notes from the Field," 50.

213. Haynes and Murris, "Epistemological Shift," 128.

Philosophy

In Chapter Three I parsed Rancière's critique of philosophy as a focus on elitism, method, and truth, and in describing his more positive account of philosophy, I posed the values of egalitarianism, assertion, and creativity. This section refers back to these critiques and norms so as to consider their fit with CPI. Again, there are plenty of other critiques of philosophy that Rancière makes that may be consistent with CPI, and which I did not cover in Chapter Three and cannot cover here. The purpose of condensing Rancière's critiques and norms of schooling and philosophy into smaller concepts is, again, to focus this study, and to make my case that there are similarities between Ranciere and CPI that may help us to think through the question of the possibility of philosophy in schools.

Those within the philosophy for/with children movement who choose to use CPI seem to share Rancière's critique of the elitism of traditional philosophy, albeit unknowingly. Traditional philosophy has been labeled "Big P Philosophy" by proponents of CPI, echoing Rancière's argument that traditional philosophy perpetuates hierarchy.[214] Proponents Amber Strong Makaiau and Chad Miller write that "Like Plato's philosopher kings, "Big P" philosophers are members of an exclusive club, accessible only to those rare souls who have endured a long period of academic preparation."[215] "Little p"

214. Amber Strong Makaiau and Chad Miller, "The Philosopher's Pedagogy," *Educational Perspectives: Journal of the College of Education/University of Hawai'i at Manoa* 44, no.1 and 2, 8-19.

215. Makaiau and Miller, 'The Philosopher's Pedagogy," 10.

philosophy, they argue, is nurtured in a CPI by way of recognizing the wonder and ability to ask questions that is inherent in all people from a young age.

David Kennedy argues that CPI is continually reconstructing philosophy[216] In order to characterize this reconstruction he argues that:

> this reconstructive impulse is fed both by the introduction of genuine communal dialogue into philosophical practice – which is a fulfillment of the Socratic promise – and the induction of children into that practice, which represents a challenge to philosophical practice as a white adult male domain governed by a narrow view of human reason.[217]

Kennedy is speaking here of the need for reconstructing "Big P" philosophy, just as Rancière has done in his critique of traditional philosophy. The description of philosophy as being under the domain of white males and a narrow view of human reason reveals Kennedy's belief that this is problematically elitist. As shown in Chapter Three, Rancière has the same issue with traditional philosophy. Reconstruction of philosophy occurs when we practice CPI because we are subverting the potential for elitism and are instead upholding an egalitarian model, wherein it is assumed that everyone is capable of reasoning. If we take Rancière's positive iterations of philosophy as also implying this kind of reconstructive impulse – never as a permanent reconstruction, but a temporary destabilization of concepts – then Rancière arguably supports "little p" philosophy.

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216. Kennedy, "Philosophy for Children and the Reconstruction of Philosophy," 349.

217. Kennedy, "Practicing philosophy of childhood," 11.

Rancière and CPI share another commonality insofar as they are concerned about philosophy viewed solely as method. They value, on the contrary, the power of assertion. I should preface this topic by stating that this is somewhat of a grey area, so I am highlighting it as a point of tension that Rancière and CPI share. Stephen Miller writes – after disparaging Rancière's *The Ignorant Schoolmaster* – that:

> philosophy, when understood properly, should make us unlearn much of what we believe, should make us uncomfortable, should make us uncertain and should ultimately, then, make us stronger and better.[218]

Even though Rancière would surely agree with a number of these alleged outcomes of philosophy, and with Miller's drawing attention to the kind of positive picture of philosophy I want to bring out in Rancière, the language of "better" may be problematic.[219] This notion of making students better through some activity that takes place at school is precisely the notion that gets called into question by Rancière's political theory and consequently by his positive notion of philosophy. Indeed, implementation or utilization of philosophy as a tool runs contrary, for Rancière, to the value of emancipation.

This concern also maps on to differing views in CPI literature regarding the purpose and potential use-value of philosophy within schools: whether the value is inherent to the method or to the 'products' of the method.[220] There is a range of reported

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218. Stephen K. Miller, "Socratic Aporia in the Classroom and the Development of Resilience," 34. *Analytic Teaching and Philosophical Praxis*, 38.1 (2017), 29-36.

219. I touch on Rancière's assertion that there can be 'better' police orders and 'better' schools elsewhere, but for the purposes of this section I am voicing the worry Rancière has about our use of this kind of ethically-loaded language.

220. Discussion of the debate itself can be found in Gregory, "Precollege Philosophy Education," 37-38, and 72-79; Haynes and Murris, "Wrong Message," 8;

benefits to doing CPI. For example, some theorists highlight the cognitive virtues CPI may promote.[221] It has also been argued that it supports student freedom or autonomy.[222] Some argue that the value of CPI comes from the fact that it is radical or subversive.[223] Treating philosophy as instrumental for other such ends is certainly found throughout CPI scholarship, but not all advocates take this approach.[224] Nancy Vansieleghem and David Kennedy explain that in what they are stipulating as the "second generation" of philosophy for children practitioners, the earlier notion of using CPI as a tool to sharpen thinking skills is too similar to the tendency in traditional schooling to instrumentalize learning; CPI

David Kennedy, "Philosophy for Children and the Reconstruction of Philosophy," 346-347, 349.

221. See Maughn Rollins Gregory in "Care as a Goal of Democratic Education," *Journal of Moral Education* 29, no. 4 (2000): 446; Philip Cam, "Fact, value and philosophy education," *Journal of Philosophy in Schools* 1, no. 1 (2014); Stephan Millett and Alan Tapper, "Benefits Of Collaborative Philosophical Inquiry In Schools," *Educational Philosophy & Theory* 44, no. 5 (2012): 546-567; Gilbert Burgh, Terri Field, and Mark Freakley, *Ethics and the Community of philosophical inquiry: Education for Deliberative Democracy* (South Melbourne: Thompson/Social Science Press, 2006).

222. See Susan Gardner, "Teaching Freedom," in *Analytic Teaching* 21, no. 1 (2000): 24-33.

223. Gregory and Granger describe the practice as radical or subversive, particularly as articulated by advocate David Kennedy. See Gregory and Granger, "Introduction: John Dewey on Philosophy and Childhood," 14.

224. Biesta, "Philosophy, Exposure, and Children," in *Philosophy for Children in Transition: Problems and Prospects,* eds. Nancy Vansieleghem and David Kennedy (Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 141-142.

ought not be seen as instrumental to some other end that is predetermined, but ought to arise within the community itself.[225]

If Rancière and many CPI practitioners caution against instrumental uses for philosophizing, yet Rancière and CPI practitioners both seem to believe that schools can be improved, what is (or should be) the relationship between philosophy and schools? It has been argued that CPI and Rancière's icon of the ignorant schoolmaster compel us to be inventive in schools – using the context in such a way as to allow novelty to emerge.[226] This may be treating the space as a kind of tool, and maybe philosophy too, but not for a set end. Speaking again of the evolving "generations" of approaches to philosophy for children, CPI being one practice among others, Vansieleghem and Kennedy explain that:

> Speculations about methods and approaches tend to be contextualized to particular communities, and the only broad consensus that does exist is that philosophy for children is about promoting the exchange of rational argument and thoughtful opinion. There is, however, no longer understood to be one best way of reasoning, for collective reason, it is held, is shaped and articulated by the social community in which it operates. Now philosophy *for* children becomes philosophy *with* children. The change in the preposition is an important index of difference: it betokens a still greater emphasis on dialogue as fundamental and indispensable to the pedagogy of philosophy, which is no longer understood as the modeling and coaching of an ideal of analytical reason, but as what generates communal reflection, contemplation and communication. In this respect, the second generation will no longer speak about philosophy for or with children in terms of a method,

225. Nancy Vangsieleghem and David Kennedy, "Introduction: What is Philosophy for Children?" in *Philosophy for Children in Transition: Problems and Prospects*, eds. Nancy Vansieleghem and David Kennedy (Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 8-9.

226. Walter Omar Kohan, Marina Santi and Jason Thomas Wozniak. "Philosophy for teachers: between ignorance, invention and improvisation." In *The Routledge International Handbook of Philosophy for Children*, 253-259. Edited by Maughn Rollins Gregory, Joanna Haynes and Karin Murris (New York: Routledge, 2017).

> but rather as a movement encompassing a medley of approaches, each with its own methods, techniques and strategies.[227]

Perhaps when looking at CPI as a movement, and indeed as a movement in which there are emergent assertions and creative responses rather than dogmatic methods, the compatibility with Rancière is quite cogent. Gert Biesta argues that often in CPI, where philosophy is being used in an educational setting, it seems to be treated as an instrument to 'develop better humans.'[228] What we ought to do, he argues, is use it to help expose ourselves, and our students, to our ignorance, to the part of ourselves that has a unique perspective and intelligence. In this way, he says, philosophy in schools can be an interruption rather than a developmental step or instrument toward producing some end.[229] Kohan and Hayes have even suggested that the ignorant schoolmaster and the CPI facilitator are indeed "difficultating," rather than facilitating because the facilitator problematizes assumptions, inferences, and so forth.[230] Interruption, or difficultating, is quite analogous to dissensus.

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227. Vangsieleghem and Kennedy, "Introduction: What is Philosophy for Children?" 9.

228. Gert Biesta, "Touching the soul? exploring an alternative outlook for philosophical work with children and young people," childhood & philosophy, rio de janeiro 13, n. 28 (2017) 435.

229. Biesta, "Philosophy, Exposure, and Children," 149; Biesta, "touching the soul?" 435.

230. Joanna Haynes and Walter Kohan, "Facilitating and Difficultating: The Cultivation of Teacher Ignorance and Inventiveness," in *Literacies, literature and learning: reading classrooms differently,* 204-221. Edited by Karin Murris and Joanna Haynes. New York: Routledge, 2018.

Universal teaching may not share the same ends as that of CPI, which for many is to reach the most reasonable conclusion or response. If we simply take the Jacototian method from *The Ignorant Schoolmaster,* there are limited results we may aim for (i.e. translating the *Telemaque*).[231] However, readers who consider other Rancièrian works tend to take him to be advocating for a more open-ended approach to education.[232] For Rancière, the only necessary component, it seems, would be the assumption of an equality of intelligence; no particular end is important. He writes of the student:

> He doesn't necessarily find what he was looking for, and even less what he was supposed to find. But he finds something new to relate to the thing that he already knows. What is essential is the continuous vigilance, the attention that never subsides without irrationality setting in.[233]

For practitioners of CPI it is not the case that in an inquiry "anything goes," for there are procedures pertaining to participation and respect that must be followed, and there must an earnest effort to co-construct knowledge.[234] Yet, parameters can be deemed as necessary

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231. Some do read Rancière and his use of Jacotot as a recommendation for following Jacotot's method, rather than seeing it as a demonstration of the principle of assuming an equality of intelligence. For an example of this literal type of reading of Rancière on Jacotot see David O. Waddington, "Wrong Place, Wrong Time: The Ignorant Schoolmaster Comes to America," delivered at the March 2018 Philosophy of Education Society Conference in Chicago, IL. Forthcoming in the *Philosophy of Education Yearbook*.

232. Waddington, "Wrong Place, Wrong Time: The Ignorant Schoolmaster Comes to America."

233. Rancière, *The Ignorant Schoolmaster,* 33.

234. Linington, Excelle, and Murris, "Education For Participatory Democracy," 40; for a mention of rules see Lena Green, "Education for Democracy: Using the Classroom Community of philosophical inquiry to Develop Habits of Reflective Judgment in South African Schools," in *Dialogue - Culture - Philosophy: Philosophizing with Children in Transcultural Environments* ed. D.G. Camhy (Sankt Augustin, Germany: Academia Verlag, 2009), 183; Haynes and Murris, "Wrong Message," 3.

within the Rancièrian picture too, for there is a need for holding a task in common just as there is a need for some force to inspire, push, or sustain one's will. In CPI, while there is an attempt to "arrive at one or more reasonable judgments regarding their own questions," there are also scholars who argue that this need not entail a linear or teleological trajectory, and that this reasonable answer is not predetermined or set in stone; what is most reasonable could change from moment to moment.[235] As Kennedy writes of a CPI dialogue:

> It is a chaotic structure, a continuously emergent, open system, whose direction can never be overdetermined. Freeze-framed at any given moment, it contains a multiplicity of possible directions in which it could move forward, which depend to a great extent on the individuals participating in the communal dialogue.[236]

The epistemology behind both this selection and the pervasive treatment of the notion of truth within CPI literature are certainly reminiscent of Pragmatism, from which the practice draws inspiration. Much like Rancière's conception of truth, where it is underlying and ineffable, so too does CPI have some element of assuming a kind of unifying, shared experience, the value of which serves as a kind of truth.[237] Participants in a CPI can share their own experiences or create hypotheticals to demonstrate their understanding of, or resistance to, a proposed position or concept. There are thus emergent, creative assertions

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235. Gregory, "Precollege Philosophy Education," 73.

236. Kennedy, "Philosophy for Children and the Reconstruction of Philosophy," 346.

237. Kennedy, "Philosophy for Children and the Reconstruction of Philosophy," 340.

that bring value to the group and ultimately disrupt moments of seeming consensus. Shared meanings, voiced understanding, and articulated thoughts can serve as a kind of communal truth, but this is secondary to the underlying assumption of the value of each community member. That which is created by each community member takes precedence over the notion of an objective kind of fact that is discoverable and separate from the lived experiences of the community members.

There are thus overlaps between the values of egalitarianism, assertion, and creativity within both Rancière and CPI's conception of philosophy. These values, a response to the problematic elitism, method, and truth arguably found in traditional philosophy, are important when considering whether philosophy can or should transpire in K-12 schools. Both Rancière and CPI have strengths and weaknesses, in my view, when analyzing schooling and philosophy. By bringing them together their respective fields of study can be invigorated, and those of us interested in bringing philosophy to schools can be constructively provoked.

Conclusion

For Rancière, schools will never be exempt from the problems that inspire and demand philosophical destabilizing, no matter how utopic the schools are, and no matter what methods or 'un-methods' we enforce within them. We see Rancière acknowledge the form of the school as a temporal break from the rest of society, thus conducive to the forging of new possibilities, yet we also see him admonish the explicative order of schools in the *Ignorant Schoolmaster*. Despite all his critiques, Rancière suggests that schools *can*

be better. These better schools, though, will always lie apart from what real philosophy is doing. Ultimately, Rancière wants to preserve the skepticism toward all social institutions, even those formed spontaneously within a CPI. In other words, while dialogue itself takes on a value in CPI, in Rancière's picture it is dissensus that has value. In each of these, it seems to fit that philosophy is focused on contestable concepts.[238] Further, participants in this conversation are each inherently equipped to contest such concepts. "Little p" philosophy allows us to refocus our relationship to truth at any moment. While Rancière is not suggesting that this is something that must be taught (for indeed, it is arguably a realization or level of awareness that is always possible), talking about it in school may offer support to those who are doubtful about the realization they have had. CPI may thus give students the confidence to do this philosophizing both inside and outside of school, but it should not be viewed as the means by which they are able to do this philosophizing in the first place. What we choose to call this in schools will never change the fact that Rancièrian, "little p," dissensual philosophizing, is in direct contrast to schooling itself.

Maughn Gregory and David Granger argue that there are central questions within the philosophy in schools movement: 1) whether children can practice philosophy 2) whether (and why) they should be invited and guided to do so, and, 3) assuming positive responses to the first two, how this should happen.[239] The similarities I have elaborated on

238. Laurance Splitter and Ann Margaret Sharp, *Teaching for Better Thinking: The Classroom Community of Inquiry* (1995) Melbourne: ACER, 130.

239. Gregory and Granger, "Introduction: John Dewey on Philosophy and Childhood," 7. Numbers introduced by me.

in this chapter, between Rancière's critiques and norms around schooling and philosophy and those found in CPI, should assure us that both Rancière and CPI would answer the above questions in a similar way. Anyone can practice philosophy, because philosophy has nothing to do with intelligence or status but is, rather, an orientation. Students in K-12 schools should be able to philosophize in schools, and it would be great if they could; given the problematic elements of schools, philosophizing in schools would be empowering, emancipatory. However, authentic philosophizing cannot be forced or guaranteed, even with the good intention of coming to schools with a philosophical method.

CPI is a response to traditional schooling practices to the extent that traditional schools maintain inequality through stultification, assume objective truth that requires explanation, and are wed to progress and the police order. CPI is a response to traditional philosophy to the extent that traditional philosophy is elitist, assumes a method that alienates lived experiences, and is predicated on singular objectivity. The norms put forth or assumed within CPI are compatible with Rancière's norms. As I have argued in this chapter, there is an extent to which CPI assumes equality of intelligence, believes in the separation between language and truth, and values egalitarianism, assertion, and creativity.

Dissensus is a pervasive value for Rancière and CPI. This chapter has argued that, granting Rancière's critiques and norms regarding schooling and philosophy, we might have good reason to practice CPI in schools. I hypothesize that CPI may be our best bet for supporting dissensus in schools. Even Kohan, a proponent of CPI and a reader of Rancière, asks the question, "Is the experience of philosophy possible in an institution, like the

school, which is overwhelmed by a determinative order?"[240] In keeping with this spirit of skepticism, let us proceed to test my hypothesis; in the next chapter of this dissertation I theorize the application of CPI to schools.

240. Kohan, "Education," 11.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE POSSIBILITY OF PHILOSOPHY IN SCHOOLS

In the previous chapter I argued that if we accept the critiques of schooling and philosophy and corresponding values shared by Rancière and community of philosophical inquiry (CPI), we have good reason to use CPI in traditional schools. However, there are limitations to bringing the practice into such schools, and CPI should not be treated as a cure-all. In this chapter I consider how the critiques and norms of schooling and philosophy support both creating new schools modeled wholly on CPI and bringing CPI into traditional schools. Although each approach ends up mirroring some of the very tendencies in schooling and philosophy that they are meant to combat, I contend that utilizing CPI in these ways is the best way to embody the values I have argued are shared by Rancière and CPI.

Whether in schools or not, a noteworthy component of CPI according to some advocates is possibility. Indeed, this is essential to education: that life is not fated, that something can be learned, that a life can be changed. Possibility is a basic premise of schooling, and its existence is the only way to distinguish compulsory schooling from overt indoctrination. Students can respond to content and instruction in different ways, and many outcomes are possible. The chapter thus also explores the verbiage of possibility

within CPI literature in the hopes of reflecting on how Rancière might further inform the question of whether philosophy is possible in schools.

Ultimately, this project aims to use Rancière to think through the possibility of philosophy in schools despite his strong warnings against both philosophy and schooling. This project presupposes that better schools and better schooling practices are possible, presupposes that it is possible to use Rancière to inform CPI. In the first section of this chapter, "Practical Possibilities," I review the idea of schools based wholly on CPI as well as the idea of introducing CPI into existing, traditional schools. [241] Returning to the driving question of this dissertation, in this second section of this chapter, "Conceptual Possibilities," I describe the ways in which the notion of possibility informs both approaches to CPI implementation.

In the introduction of this dissertation I asked: How might the articulation of a positive Rancièrean conception of philosophy help in understanding what is at stake in practicing CPI in U.S. K-12 schools? Ultimately, the conception of philosophy I have worked on illuminating in this dissertation does not have a purpose in the way that must be justified when it goes into an existing traditional school, or even when it founds new schools. It is not ends-oriented. CPI entails the assumptions that Rancière argues we should have, embodying the values he thinks philosophy should have. While it entails the values of egalitarianism, assertion, and creativity, these are all based on what is possible – what is assumed, not measured nor articulated. Rancière holds that real political moments or

241. Of course, these options are not mutually exclusive. I distinguish between these approaches simply to consider the implications of each approach separately.

emancipation occur as ruptures in the police order – spontaneously and without method, or not at all. CPI inquirers, exemplifying an appreciation for this kind of spontaneity, allow for the community itself to establish the questions prompting each inquiry, and to follow the inquiry where it leads.[242] So how can a practical question about this be answered, or even asked?

Before considering how it might be practically possible to implement CPI in schools, a small disclaimer is in order: it is important to acknowledge that this is a venture Rancière would not wholeheartedly endorse. Pelletier warns about applying Rancièrean-inspired notions to educational settings because there are two ways in which he is *not* concerned with communities (and analogously, learning communities or schools). Firstly, Pelletier argues, Rancière is not worried about making schools do a better job of assessing skills and determining appropriate social roles, because he rejects the idea that there is any necessary relationship between social function and capacity. Social roles, specialization, and the distribution of power that they entail are understood as arbitrary, constructed, and designated in order to accomplish collective ends. Thus, if we think that we can use Rancière to develop schools that administer career-placement tests more successfully, or that develop 'better citizens,' we are mistaken. Secondly, Pelletier argues, Rancière is not concerned with helping those who suffer because of how their community (or school, or

242. We see this too in Storme and Vlieghe. "Offering a 'manual of suspension' would consist in explaining how we should begin anew, but the only manual for beginning anew is a perfectly empty book that offers potentiality itself, in its emptiness, in its lack of destiny." Storme and Vlieghe, "The Experience of Childhood and the Learning Society," 23.

society) is ordered. Schools are part of what Rancière calls the *archipolitical apparatus*, insofar as they merely serve to explain and thus justify socio-economic inequality.[243] I ventured to use Rancière for this project because of this strong skepticism, but it is important to acknowledge that the aim of using Rancière to conduct a pedagogical practice does involve some contradiction.

Practical Possibilities

If we agree with the critiques of schooling and philosophy I attributed to Rancière in Chapters Two and Three, we could argue that philosophy should exist in schools, and that the best form of it would be CPI.[244] By way of reminder, the conception of schooling that I have argued is found in both Rancière and CPI is based on critiques of inequality, stultification, truth, explanation, progress, and the police order. Traditional schooling entails these problems to varying degrees because it is predicated on students progressing through ranked grades under supervision of teachers and administrators, obliged to demonstrate their understanding of discrete bodies of knowledge so as to earn diplomas and grades that determine their ability to receive training for, or acceptance into, various

243. Caroline Pelletier, "No Time or Place for Universal Teaching: The Ignorant Schoolmaster and Contemporary Work on Pedagogy," 112.

244. There are at least three ways to bring CPI into existing schools: we could have discrete inquiry sessions about general topics nestled between traditional classroom activities; we could use inquiry as a component of instruction for every subject; or we could use inquiry as a method when covering instruction on the history of philosophy. In this section, when I reference bringing CPI into traditional schools I am referring to these methods collectively.

roles (i.e. careers) within society. Challenging these assumptions of traditional schooling involves a different ethical, epistemological, and methodological orientation. Hence, the alternative values pertaining to schooling I have drawn out are the assumption of equality of intelligence, a belief in the separation between language and truth, and the value of dissensus. The alternative conception of philosophy shared by both Rancière and CPI advocates that I have elucidated over the last four chapters includes the values of egalitarianism, assertion, and creativity, which are in direct contrast with the elitism, method, and truth found in traditional philosophy. Some questions remain: does it matter what *kind* of school CPI is implemented in? Tactically, is there an order of priority that should be followed?

Community of Philosophical Inquiry in New Schools

Some authors within CPI literature have theorized whole-school models based on critiques and values common to Rancière and CPI and have problematized cases where philosophy is *merely* brought into traditional schools. In this section I focus on David Kennedy, whose body of literature, though without explicit reference to Rancière, betrays some of Rancière's radical commitments.[245] I highlight ideas put forth by Kennedy in this section in order to think through ways that a school based on CPI might align with

245. Granted, David Kennedy and Nadia Kennedy have written not only about the whole-school model, but also of practicing CPI at the level of the single-discipline as well as the inter-disciplinary approach when bringing CPI into existing schools. See Nadia and David Kennedy, "Community of Philosophical Inquiry as a Discursive Structure, and its Role in School Curriculum Design," *Journal of Philosophy of Education* 45, no. 2 (2011): 265-283.

Rancière, as well as ways such a school may still be problematic from a Rancièrian perspective.

I have drawn upon Rancière in this project precisely because he is so critical of schools as social institutions. He insists that if we take equality as our end in schools, we are attributing to schools "the fantasmatic power of realizing social equality, or at least, of reducing 'social fragmentation.'"[246] If we are starting out with inequality, aiming for equality, we are doomed. CPI allows us to start from an assumption of equality, and indeed thrives on dissensus. A school based on this practice would seem, at least in theory, to structurally avoid the problem of aiming for equality.

Kennedy and Rancière agree on the role of schools in society, each describing school as a central way in which the police order is reinforced. Kennedy describes the school as:

> a site where the adult-child relation is regularized, formalized, fitted for the construction of relations of authority in the wider adult world - the "workplace," the "moneyplace," and the "policyplace." It is in school where a process secondary to family socialization but equally powerful is initiated. Here the desires, the aspirations, the prohibitions, the fatalisms, the boundaries, and even the transgressive dreams of the modal adult - the adult with certain commonly shared tastes, aspirations, and expectations - are instilled and enforced in hegemonic form as discourses, dispositions, beliefs, and practices.[247]

As I described in Chapter Two, Rancière takes schools to be prime examples of the police order where, just as Kennedy describes above, students learn the ways in which they fit. A

246. Rancière, "On Ignorant Schoolmasters," 11.

247. David Kennedy, *The Well of Being: Childhood, Subjectivity, and Education*, SUNY Press: Albany (2006) 154-155.

school constituted by CPI could theoretically help mitigate this problem, insofar as the practice can include students asserting different viewpoints that challenge prescribed roles, as well as scrutiny of terms and definitions. CPI can indeed challenge the police order that pervades within a group. However, how might a CPI-based school push back against the overall premise of schooling, which is still part of the larger police order? In a traditional school one is said to move through classes, grades, and so on. How does a CPI-based school differ from this, if at all, on a structural level? Even if the school allows for a reprieve from the police order that obtains in the rest of society, it may still ultimately function as part of the larger social police order.

To consider how these questions might be answered, I will describe in more detail Kennedy's suggestion for a CPI-based school. Again, Kennedy does not explicitly connect his suggestions to Rancière, so I provide what I take to be the corresponding values in Rancière (which I have argued are also in CPI). Kennedy argues that the whole school should essentially be a CPI, and that there are four different criteria that ought to be followed in such a school.[248] I will briefly cover each of these criteria put forth by Kennedy and suggest how they align with the values that, I have argued, are found in Rancière.

Firstly, Kennedy asserts that such a school would entail "a hermeneutical approach to self and other, that is, the recognition and acceptance of distance and relation in

248. I do not highlight these four points of Kennedy's to argue that he and Rancière are wholly compatible. Rather, I use these to draw out elements of commonality for the purposes of thinking through the questions driving this dissertation.

dialectical process."[249] This aligns with the belief in the separation between language and truth because the distance between self and other, and the dialogue required for navigating this distance, are respected. Secondly, a CPI school would be premised on "the affirmation of the other as the "single one," which is identified with alterity, or the decentered psychological organization associated with "the rupture of the egoist-I."[250] This is analogous to the assumption of an equality of intelligence – particularly the singular, unitary nature of intelligence – and represents the value of egalitarianism insofar as it grants that the other, while distinct and different, is just as distinct and different as oneself. Thirdly, this school would also have "an emphasis on noninstrumental relations, which in this case imply a meticulous respect for an attention to the perceptions, interests, and goals of childhood and of individual children."[251] This third criterion reflects the critique of progress and the values of dissensus and creativity, for it is concerned with unique perspectives of every participant rather than a pre-determined end. Lastly, Kennedy argues that a CPI school would engage in:

> continuous attention to equitable relations of power, which implies political autonomy and self-governance, both within the school – which includes the classroom itself – and in the school's relation to larger associations of which it may be a part.[252]

249. Kennedy, *The Well of Being*, 167.

250. Kennedy, *The Well of Being*, 167.

251. Kennedy, *The Well of Being*, 167.

252. Kennedy, *The Well of Being*, 167.

This fourth criterion is comparable to egalitarianism again, along with the value of assertion, and the critiques of elitism and the police order, for it keeps the power within reach of all members of the school.[253]

Applying our conception of philosophy to an entire school may be substantively and structurally different because it would not be like a value-added model, nor would it be beholden to the criteria by which the school is already organized. Making whole, sustainable schools based on CPI might appease, in some form, the worry expressed by Walter Kohan that the method simply inserted into a school is "a subtle way of producing and stimulating some superficial or formal changes so that the fundamental structures may be preserved."[254] Yet even Kohan will insist that "there is no objective or impartial education" – a position with which Rancière would surely agree.[255] Rancière insists that his works are not meant as an offering up of a new pedagogy, nor an anti-pedagogy. He argues that in his ideal of the ignorant schoolmaster, for example, he is not offering:

> an educational idea that one could apply to systemic school reform. The virtue of ignorance is first of all a virtue of dissociation. By asking us to dissociate teaching from knowledge, such a virtue, such a quality, precludes itself from ever being the

253. It would seem by this last line regarding political autonomy and self-governance that Kennedy's conception of a CPI-school would indeed be a self-sufficient school, and that it could in this way work toward combating the larger police order. Indeed, I would like to explore this further in later work, particularly with respect to the way in which this vision might overlap with anarchist visions of schooling. For more on Kennedy's vision see David Kennedy, "Anarchism, Schooling, and Democratic Sensibility." *Studies in Philosophy and Education* 36, no. 5 (2017): 551-568.

254. Kohan, "The Origin," 26.

255. Kohan, "The Origin," 30.

> principle of any institution where teaching and knowledge would come into harmony in order to optimize the social functioning of an institution.[256]

There is indeed a tension between Kennedy's more utopic vision of an intentional school and Rancière's admonishment of any utopic vision coinciding with social institutions (as radical as they may be); where there is *anything* social, for Rancière, there is the police order. A school like this would thus still need to be scrutinized and changed by all members as needed.

CPI helps us to avoid the inequality and stultification found in traditional schools, and to combat the reified notion of truth and the elitism for which traditional philosophy is criticized. There is some risk that to justify the creation of CPI schools to the general public there could be an over-dependence on the method of CPI, and of course there would be some explanation of the practice required. There may be some risk that in arguing for the creation of these schools, there is a projection of society 'progressing' as a result. There is a risk that the creators of such a school would come across as elitist as compared to those who are not part of the school, particularly when administering requirements such as official CPI training for all teachers in the school.

Overall, the benefit of making a purely CPI school would be more pervasive if it were a self-sufficient school, and it seems that this would be a noble pursuit. One line of discussion within Kennedy's works is regarding the democratic sensibilities that CPI supports. Kennedy has described the whole-school model of CPI as an intentional community, "conceived normatively by definition – that is, it is both experimental and

256. Rancière, "On Ignorant Schoolmasters," 14.

emergent *and* guided by normative ideals; it is not a community that "just happens," nor is it a community that is determined from above, by a hierarchy of power."[257] When adults and children within a school are in equal dialogue, learning from one another as part of an "intergenerational intentional community" or "adult-child collective," Kennedy argues, then egalitarianism pervades the school.[258] The whole-school approach gestured toward by Kennedy also entails valuation for democracy, and for protecting the school in its role in cultivating democratic citizens by engaging in authentic democratic practices in the classroom and throughout the school itself. Kennedy and Kohan write that CPI replaces "the echo chamber of the solitary thinker, connects philosophy, not just with epistemological and ethical transformation, but with authentic democratic practice."[259] Kennedy also refers to CPI as "deep democratic practice."[260] He sees each school, provided it is set up properly, as a "powerful performative and experimental zone" as allowing for "shared, participatory governance."[261] Now, it might be true that dialogue is a skill useful in the form of democracy, but if one is sympathetic to Rancière's critiques of formal democracy, then portraying dialogue as a method supportive of formal democracy is problematic. It may not be that such prizing of democracy entails all of the critiques of

257. Kennedy, *The Well of Being*, 174.

258. David Kennedy, "The New School," *Journal of Philosophy of Education* 52, no. 1 (2018): 108.

259. Kennedy and Kohan, "gert biesta and philosophical work," 412.

260. Kennedy, "Dialogic Schooling," 122.

261. Kennedy, "The New School," 108.

schooling and philosophy reviewed thus far, but it could be construed as a fixation on both method and progress.

It seems to be the case that one is limited with respect to how prescriptively a new CPI school can be described, given that prescription itself may foreclose too much in the way of creativity, assertion, and egalitarianism. Participants in a new, Rancière-inspired CPI school ought to be engaged together in designing their own school-community. One might ask whether CPI would be used for every activity within this kind of school, whether there would still be discrete classes centered on disciplines, and whether philosophy itself would be a class (assuming there are classes). Rancière inspires an appreciation for the way in which engaging with others in community can challenge ones will in a positive way. Deciding on the practical details of a school could indeed be a collective challenge informed by care for each individual, a respect for the Other (to the extent that this care is possible). The process of collectively organizing a school based on CPI could be guided by the principles I have argued CPI shares in common with Rancière regarding schooling and philosophy. The collective school would keep such principles at the core of its inquiry, ever orbiting around the principles upon which it is inspired, yet never fixated on one particular demonstration of them.

As a further consideration, independent schools that exist outside traditional public schools are often populated by students of parents who have the social capital required to purposely send their students to a special school: such parents are knowledgeable about alternative options and can afford to pay for any extra costs involved. Such students already have a kind of privilege for this reason, as they have parents that care in some way.

In forming the type of school described in this section, it seems it would be quite important for the process to entail outreach to students who are not currently being helped within public schools, or to find some other way to mitigate this risk of elitism. Again, how this would happen without replicating various ills of schooling and philosophy may prove to be difficult. For example, recruiting such students might require some kind of explication as to how a CPI school will be better, will help the students or community progress, and so on.

As I have drawn out in this section, there are benefits to creating wholly-CPI schools if adopting Rancière's views, yet there are also potential problems. There is more to be explored in this arena, given that this thesis does not delve into different models of radical schools. While it would be a worthwhile scholarly endeavor to explore various existing models of radically different schools in order to show where Rancière and CPI might align with such examples, it still seems to be the case that some of the details of these future, ideal schools need to be ambiguous in principle – only formed in the present, when they are brought into existence in community. What I have done in this section is to offer a start regarding how one might consider applying and problematizing Rancière and CPI in forming new schools. In order not to be exclusive with respect to methods and applications, in the section that follows I consider the alternative approach of bringing CPI into existing schools.

Community of Philosophical Inquiry in Existing Schools

There are functionalist reasons for inserting CPI into schools as they exist, despite the problems inherent in schooling. Even if the ultimate goal were to create schools based entirely on CPI, bringing CPI to existing schools can serve as an experimental practice, enabling practitioners to discern various considerations that would not be possible to discern if merely theorizing about CPI in schools. If we are concerned with helping as many students as possible, bringing CPI to existing schools until a more ideal scenario of newly created schools can reach fruition could ultimately impact more students. Even without the end goal of creating new schools, one might take a utilitarian view and argue that helping more students is better, so CPI should be rolled out on a large scale in as many public school districts as possible. It is arguably less expensive and time-consuming to insert a few CPI sessions in schools rather than to build everything from the ground up.

Contemporary literature offers examples of how to integrate philosophy into schools, including descriptions of lesson plans, or offers descriptions of formal and informal studies showing the impact of dialogue in the classroom so as to bolster efforts to increase the practice.[262] It is important to have data to show the impacts of bringing philosophy into schools so that, among other reasons, teachers can implement the practice, funds are provided for research into the benefits of the practice, and philosophers of

262. For example, in *Philosophy in Schools* the eighteen articles that comprise parts two, three, and four of the book are dedicated exclusively to descriptions of lesson plans, extracurricular projects for students, outreach programs, and methods of assessment on the class and school-wide level. *Philosophy in Schools: An Introduction for Philosophers and Teachers*. Edited by Sara Goering, Nicholas J. Shudak, and Thomas E. Wartenberg (New York: Routledge, 2013).

education can support the study of CPI within academia.[263] Without empirical data and justifications, administrators, teachers, parents, and students may not accept the novelty of CPI. If we want philosophy to be adopted in schools, it is necessary to show the results philosophy can be expected to have if it is to be adopted. Providing lesson plans is another practical way to help the practice flourish and can help teachers serve as facilitators of CPI even if they have not been formally trained or have not studied philosophy.

Unfortunately, inputting the practice into traditional schools means that it can still be usurped to justify inequality, may still be delivered in a stultifying fashion, is shrouded in language of truth and explanation, and does not deliberately challenge the trajectory of progress nor the norms of the police order in a traditional school. A CPI session within the confines of the school day may challenge these notions during the session itself and may indeed inspire thought or action outside the school, but the school day is still presumed to continue as expected at the end of each session. Students leave the classroom and may need to ignore everything they thought about during a CPI session in order to succeed in their test-prep courses or to make decisions about which academic path will provide the most lucrative or even manageable financial future. Inserting CPI into traditional schools may keep us beholden to the aims of schooling itself. Once in a school, even with the best intentions, there is naturally a limit to how much a group of inquirers within a classroom can question the schooling process itself while inside a school. This is unacceptable from

263. For an example of data provided to support the acceptance of community of philosophical inquiry in schools see Alina Reznitskaya and Ian A. G. Wilkinson. *The most Reasonable Answer: Helping Students Build Better Arguments Together*. Harvard Education Press, Boston: Harvard Education Press, 2017.

the Rancièrian perspective, and the concern is echoed in the CPI literature as well. As Storme and Vlieghe note, "philosophy for/with children is (…) subservient to the existing regime."[264] This is because even if we do CPI in a classroom, we are still wed to the other things that are happening outside the school – in the school district and in society at large. In this sense, it can be argued that the inquiry is not all that authentic. This may seem to be a cynical concern but is cogent if CPI is treated as a discrete subject in school. Even if CPI promotes transferrable skills, the issue of what these skills are applied to is of concern.

As a further point, promoting the instrumentality of CPI may contradict and perhaps counteract the non-instrumental value of the practice. As Storme and Vlighe note:

> The currently hard-felt need to define philosophical activity as a useful activity - in its content, its methods, or its objectives - jeopardizes the very *potentiality* that characterizes philosophy.[265]

Potentiality and creativity may be facets of philosophy, but they are difficult to articulate when educators are asked to justify their time spent with specific methods for delivery of specific educational values.[266] Further, presenting philosophy as something that provides for possibility or novelty, as I will discuss further in the following section, returns us to the issue of all things needing to have some place, purpose, function, or demonstration.

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264. Thomas Storme and Joris Vlieghe. "The Experience of Childhood and the Learning Society: Allowing the Child to be Philosophical and Philosophy to be Childish." In *Philosophy for Children in Transition: Problems and Prospects*, 13-29. Edited by Nancy Vansieleghem and David Kennedy. Walden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012, 26.

265. Storme and Vlieghe, "The Experiences of Childhood and the Learning Society," 26.

266. Haynes and Murris address this and other challenges in "Epistemological Shift," 123.

Portraying philosophy as a feature that can be added to current schools to enhance and enhance our citizenship also detracts from the critique of compulsory education and its implicit obsession with progress – an issue Rancière challenges us to acknowledge.

An aspect of the philosophical conception that has taken shape over the past four chapters is indeed in conflict with an instrumental approach to philosophy in schools, and much of the language used when framing its use-value distorts the real value of this type of philosophy. As Storme and Vlieghe write:

> this definition of philosophical practice, as the cultivation of critical thinking skills, turns these skills into competences to acquire, and thereby seems to undermine neotenic openness and to make it subservient to a regime of thought that is not its own creation.[267]

Framing philosophy as having a use-value that maps on to standards of intelligence and success already existing in our culture forces us to buy into the problems exposed by Rancière and CPI literature. Defining philosophy as having a kind of use value is problematic if the real value is not a kind of usefulness, measurability, or demonstration.[268] Making this case in an even stronger way, Kennedy argues that genuine dialogue cannot even happen if the relationship is premised on some kind of instrumentalism.[269] Having an

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267. Storme and Vlieghe, "The Experience of Childhood and the Learning Society," 26.

268. This concern has been echoed in literature since Storme and Vlieghe's article as well. Jasinski and Lewis elaborate on the neotenic openness argued to be at the heart of CPI, arguing that the practice should move toward creating "communities of infancy." See Jasinski, Igor and Tyson Lewis, "Community of Infancy: Suspending the Sovereignty of the Teacher's Voice," *Journal of Philosophy of Education,* vol. 15, no. 4 (2016): 538-553.

269. Kennedy, *The Well of Being*, 166.

end in sight for dialogue means that at least one interlocutor is not going into the dialogue with the possibility of changing their mind nor even altering their conception of the relevant driving question in the inquiry. In this way, Kennedy offers, the dialogue is not genuine.

When working to justify the aims of philosophy in schools one must be cognizant of potentially replicating the problematic forms of philosophy and the problematic notions associated with schooling. Philosophy in schools has been depicted as a unique practice that no other subject in schools is offering, a way to help university philosophy departments, and as a set of skills useful for other disciplines.[270] Sometimes philosophy thus comes into schools as a way of propping up the problematic elitism of traditional philosophers and indeed the academic field of which they are a part.

I am not denying that there are benefits of engaging in CPI in K-12 schools, and I am indeed an avid supporter of any way that we can introduce philosophy into schools. I have several times been a judge and organizer for the National High School Ethics Bowl, which may be the farthest from Rancière's views as you can get. As a reminder, I am using Rancière as a foil to problematize (and perhaps strengthen or give up) my dream of a

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270. CPI has been described by theorists as supportive of certain cognitive virtues. See Gregory in "Care as a Goal of Democratic Education," 446; Cam, "Fact, value and philosophy education;" Stephan Millett and Alan Tapper. "Benefits Of Collaborative Philosophical Inquiry In Schools." *Educational Philosophy & Theory* 44, no. 5 (2012): 546-567; Burgh, Field, and Freakley, *Ethics and the Community of Inquiry.* It has been argued that taking philosophy in high school looks good on college applications, and that pre-college philosophy will help to expand philosophy departments. See Roger Hunt, "2 Reasons High Schools Should Teach Philosophy," on *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, Dec. 15, 2012.

philosophy-based high school. Having studied philosophy as an undergraduate and graduate student, convinced that my struggles in high school may have been assuaged had I been recognized for the philosophical questions I was grappling with as a teen, I tend to believe that even just handing a high school student a Platonic dialogue will add some good to the world. My inclination is to do whatever it takes to expose more students to philosophical inquiry, regardless of the form – even if it is a photocopy of an ancient Greek dialogue. If the way to do this is to make a case for the importance of learning humanistic foundations, I am not opposed to this strategy. However, if we are considering these tactics in light of some of the fundamental principles that I argue are implied in both CPI and Rancière, there is more to be considered.

To get philosophy into schools we need to pitch its functional dimension. Arguably, one could emphasize certain more marketable benefits of doing CPI, even if the real objective of the practice entails providing a space where there is no end-game and no ulterior purpose. Indeed, this is the approach I tend to take, supporting any and all efforts to bring philosophy and CPI into schools, even though I want to change them. Indeed, it might be the case that Vansieleghem and Kennedy are right when they assert that CPI, with its inherently subversive quality, "represents a sort of Trojan Horse wheeled into the ideological state apparatus of Western schooling."[271] Bringing CPI into schools is a way to make philosophy – of the quite radical type – possible in schools.

271. Vangsieleghem and Kennedy, "Introduction: What is Philosophy for Children?" 10.

School as a Place for Possibility

Kennedy reminds us that traditional schools will always be places of struggle between adults and children – two cultures, caught in a relation of power.[272] His answer to this is to acknowledge this power relation within schools and to ultimately protect youth from the outside world by preserving space for the novelty they will inevitably produce within the school, particularly in CPI sessions. This dialogue allows for "reconstruction of epistemological and ontological convictions that better match an emergent future."[273] It is novelty that is the underlying value, rather than adherence to what already exists.

Similarly, Jan Masschelein and Maarten Simons call attention to a positive characterization of the school that Rancière has offered, wherein school is a *form* of equalization insofar as the space of a school offers students a temporal break from the inequities they experience in their lives outside.[274] By conceiving of the school's form rather than content, Masschelein and Simons align themselves with what may be an ideal that we can derive from Pelletier's interpretation: Rancière is not advocating for schools as places where social harmony can become manifest, but instead, as places where we can challenge the very aim of social harmony.[275] For Rancière, democratic acts are emergent,

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272. Kennedy, *The Well of Being*, 163.

273. David Kennedy, "Dialogic Schooling." *Analytic Teaching and Philosophical Practice* 35,1 (2014), 122.

274. Masschelein and Simons, "The Hatred of Public Schooling," 156-158. Walter Kohan insists that schools are much different now, but that philosophy might be brought into schools to disrupt this issue. See Kohan and Kennedy, 201.

275. Pelletier, "No Time," 115.

excessive ruptures that break from the way we perceive the world (the distribution/partition of the sensible), and schools for Rancière are thus just as conducive to these moments as other places.[276]

Kennedy and the subset of radical thinkers found in the intersection between Rancière and CPI propose alternative conceptions of schools wherein true possibility is protected and nurtured when it emerges.[277] This position holds that in such a school, or intentional community, students are not burdened with the material economy, hence serving a unique function in society. Schools may reflect some problematic features of society, but they also serve as a space apart from society, and maintaining this space is important if we want youth to be able to truly imagine a different world and make changes.[278]

As with some advocates of CPI, Rancière warns that we ought not expect for schools to be free of stultification, or the other problems inherent in schooling, for schools are part of the police order. However, Rancière reminds us that his critique of institutions is not based on an ideal of a stateless society free of all institutions, for he says that there are still good things made possible through institutions in terms of realizing personal and

276. Lewis, "Paulo Freire's," 126-127.

277. David Kennedy. "An Archetypal Phenomenology of Skholé." *Educational Theory* 67, 3 (December 2017): 273-290, 282.

278. As Kennedy writes, his proposed New School is "set apart from the everyday world of production." Kennedy, "The New School," 107.

social capacities.[279] His insistence is that we should not assume that equality is an end that can be achieved via the state or some alternative to it, but rather that equality is continually enacted through our assumptions. As Rancière puts it, "intellectual emancipation is necessarily distinct from social and institutional logic. That is to say that there is no social emancipation, and no emancipatory school."[280] A practitioner of CPI who is informed by Rancière acknowledges the messiness of social institutions, but decides not to profess to be contributing to a social institution that miraculously represents knowledge and truth, nor to judge who is more deserving of having their basic necessities met, nor to lead in a struggle for social harmony. Administrators who are informed by CPI may grant more autonomy to teachers, for they can assume an equality of intelligence on the part of their teaching staff.

Rancière can help with the tendency of those working to bring philosophy into schools to embrace methodological purity. CPI practitioners can learn from Rancière that if they are worried about the elitism of philosophy they should also worry about the elitism of their methods. What should philosophical pedagogy look like? What books or prompts should be used to spark philosophical dialogue? Who counts as a qualified CPI facilitator? What kind of assessment should be used for CPI? These are all questions that assume that we can continue refining our practices, and take different stances on the answers to these questions. There may be better and worse ways of accomplishing certain ends, but Rancière offers a reminder for those who find themselves becoming dogmatic in their

279. Rancière with Todd May, "Democracy, Anarchism, and Radical Politics Today: An Interview with Jacques Rancière," Todd May, Benhamin Noys, and Saul Newman. Translated. by John Lechte. *Anarchist Studies* 16, no. 2 (2008): 173-185.

280. Rancière, "On Ignorant Schoolmasters," 9.

approach to philosophy in schools: there can be no science of emancipation. It may be necessary to insist on certain parameters, set up metrics and methods, cite the benefits of critical, caring, and dialogical thinking, but the possibility that all this work is meant to support cannot be foreseen and will never be wholly captured. The burden of emancipation is largely internal, for it entails examining our own assumptions, the judgments we make about reality, and the expectations we set for others, for society, and for ourselves. In some ways, the possibility of philosophy in schools thus depends on one's level of comfort with possibility itself.

Conceptual Possibilities

Although it did not start out as a term I thought important in bridging these two bodies of scholarship, the notion of possibility has come to weigh heavily on my mind while thinking through Rancière and CPI. Firstly, possibility is a presupposition of schooling, because education requires the potential to learn – the potential for a change to occur in a student. Secondly, possibility is a practical word, because one can ask whether philosophy of the sort considered in this dissertation is possible in schools. Finally, possibility seems to flavor all the critiques and values that Rancière and CPI share, for the dissensual philosophical dialogue is premised on an always possible disagreement – the possibility represented by the perspective of the Other. In the previous section I looked at practical considerations. This section will give a gloss on some of the elements to consider surrounding conceptual possibility, given all that has been covered thus far. I explain the notions of subjectivization and emancipation in Rancière and show how they are values

supported in CPI literature as well. I describe at greater length how possibility figures into Rancière and CPI on a conceptual level. Before ending the section I offer the caveat that viewing possibility as novelty, and treating this novelty as the primary value of CPI or schooling itself, is problematic from the Rancièrean perspective.

Subjectivization and Emancipation

Rancière proposes that real emancipation and real democracy obtain through a process of subjectivization – defined as "disidentification, removal from the naturalness of a place," wherein, by assuming an equality of intelligence, we forgo any allegiance to the idea that power and intelligence are linked.[281] Because this process of subjectivization is predicated on an emergent element and is therefore a supplement to the existing order, it cannot be predetermined and thus cannot be ordained from the outside – not by a teacher nor by any authority figure.[282] The process of subjectivization "happens not *in* actuality but *in spite of* actuality."[283] Subjectivization precludes conformity.

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281. Rancière, *On the Shores,* 36; Biesta and Bingham, *Jacques Rancière*, 33, Masschelein and Simons, "The Hatred of Public Schooling," 155; Lewis, "Aesthetic Regime," 57; Lewis, "The Future," 42-43; Gert Biesta, "A New Logic of Emancipation: The Methodology of Jacques Rancière," *Educational Theory* 60 (2010): 46-49. Rancière, "Against an Ebbing Tide," 245.

282. Biesta and Bingham, *Jacques Rancière*, 33, for description of subjectivization as supplemental. Biesta's work on this is also discussed briefly in Ingerid Straume, "Democracy, Education, and the Need for Politics." *Studies in Philosophy and Education* 35 (2016): 41. One interpretation (see Vlieghe, "Alphabetization,"192) holds that Rancière attempts to take the personal contingencies outside of this dynamic as well, requiring that real emancipatory acts be utterly undetermined by embodiment, but I am not convinced by this interpretation.

283. Biesta and Bingham, *Jacques Rancière*, 130.

There are many examples of subjectivization that come to mind, but an easy one is the recent public dialogue about transgender bodies. While gender-convention in our recent history has held that people are either male or female, it is now understood by at least some that a person can be born one way but identify in another. This kind of gender identity goes against physical form and is an assertion about one's own identity, challenging the notion that our physical bodies have anything to do with how we should perform socially, how we should feel inside.

Emancipation obtains in emergent forms and utterances not previously expressed or policed.[284] To put it in metaphysical terms, you are emancipated if you recognize that the material conditions of the world are not essential properties, and that existence could in theory manifest itself differently. In terms of experience, we can perceive and observe regardless of what situation we are in. There is the possibility to choose to be kind even in violent situations, or to focus on a goal even in chaos. Emancipation is the recognition that we can choose to not be dictated by our circumstances.

In Buddhist terms I would argue that this understanding of emancipation is akin to the notion of emptiness, where the practitioner recognizes that the material world itself and our physical reactions to it are at root only temporary, while consciousness is a constant that has no essential nature. [285] The way things appear, the way we perceive things, says

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284. Biesta and Bingham, *Jacques Rancière*, 73-85; Lewis, "Aesthetic Regime," 58.

285. For an introduction and larger text on the concept of emptiness from a Western philosophical perspective see Malcolm David Eckel, *To See the Buddha: A*

nothing about any objective reality that exists. Emancipation is a break with what exists, a true mark of freedom. To be emancipated is to defy what *is*, to acknowledge the apparent facts and to choose otherwise. It may seem that this is blatant naivety or evidence of privilege, for surely one can much more comfortably "ignore facts" if they have plenty to eat, a secure home, and the other material conditions that make life safe.[286] In part, my response to this would be that attention to the transitivity of material circumstances, or to the constant threat of change and impermanence, can be a helpful reminder even for those who may be *too* comfortable: you can always choose how you react to change. On the other hand, I feel that this notion of emancipating oneself could be inappropriately prescribed as a remedy for social injustice that deserves correction; problems are not always caused by individuals nor can they always be fixed by way of personal meditation or reflection.[287]

Philosopher's Quest for the Meaning of Emptiness (Princeton University Press: New Jersey, 1992), 2-4.

286. There are criticisms of Rancière's refusal to commit to ontology or specific prescriptions. For example, since he argues that assumptions are just opinions, regardless of whether we are scientists or janitors, one can wonder where he falls with respect to mitigating discrepancies about important empirical disagreements such as climate change or racially motivated policies. Regarding ontology see Bram Ieven, "Heteroreductives – Rancière's disagreement with ontology," *Parallax*, 15.3 (2009): 50-62. Regarding mitigating discrepancies see Hallward, "Subversion of Mastery," 39-43.

287. There is worry in the literature that Rancière's entire argument amounts to a suggestion to make an attitudinal shift but is not helpful in making actual changes to exploitative institutions and economies nor in addressing strategies and affect intrinsic in the (dis)sensual politics he promotes. See Davis, "The Radical Pedagogies," 188-189; Alex Means, "Aesthetics, Affect, And Educational Politics," *Educational Philosophy & Theory*, 43.10 (2011): 1092; Lewis, "Realm of the Senses," 296.

Rather than acting on the assumption that schooling effectively recognizes and sorts intelligence in order to justify oppression across social stations or to substantiate socioeconomic disparities and hierarchies, emancipation entails awareness that social roles are contracts that do not signify essential differences or intellectual merits. Emancipation thus aligns with a presupposition regarding the value of egalitarianism.[288] Subjectivization "verifies equality" because it demonstrates one's ability/possibility to exercise one's will, and a recognition of that same force in others.[289] Tyson Lewis even asserts that education just *is* subjectivation of the will.[290] To be educated is thus to recognize oneself (and others) as learner, as one who is choosing what to take on in life, what to become, how to contribute to the world. Again, this could be misinterpreted as putting every burden on individuals, and placing blame for societal inequities on individual mindsets. Emancipation should be seen instead as an ideal for those in society who are in positions of relative

288. *Rancière*'s notion of equality has also been called 'radical egalitarianism,' and is depicted through an educational lens in *The Ignorant Schoolmaster.* For more on radical egalitarianism see Jean-Philippe Deranty, "Introduction: A Journey in Equality," in *Jacques Rancière: Key Concepts* (Routledge: New York, 2010), 3.

289. Maarten Simons and Jan Masschelein, "Governmental, Political And Pedagogic Subjectivation: Foucault With Rancière." In *Public Education, and the Taming of Democracy,* 76-92. Edited by Maarten Simons, and Jan Masschelein, Editors. *Rancière* (Walden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 88.

290. Lewis, *Aesthetics of Education*, 9. Jason E. Smith may also agree with this assertion, with respect to Rancière's discussion in *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*. See "The Master in His Place: Jacques Rancière and the Politics of the Will," in *Everything is Everything: Jacques Rancière between Intellectual Emancipation and Aesthetics Education* edited by Jason E. Smith and Annette Weisser (Pasadena: Art Center Graduate Press, 2011).

authority vis a vis students, and are engaged in practices intended to change both themselves and society in order that equality can be better enacted.

Emancipation occurs without planning, because it is individual and sporadic. CPI can help the community itself to deliberately come to grips with the reality in which we are each imbricated as individuals grappling with representation, communication, iteration, and social construction of roles – each of us with an equal connection to intelligence, will, awareness, and each with our own *haeecity*.[291] As Rancière writes:

> Equality is fundamental and absent, timely and untimely, always up to the initiative of individuals and groups who, set against the ordinary course of events, take the risk of verifying their equality, of inventing individual and collective forms for its verification. Affirmation of these simple principles in fact constitutes an unprecedented dissonance, a dissonance one must, in a way, forget in order to continue improving schools, programs and pedagogies, but that one must also, from time to time, listen to again so that the act of teaching does not lose sight of the paradoxes that give it meaning.[292]

We need to keep our hopes in check, appreciating the authentic ways of engaging one another and ourselves when these moments do happen. Hearkening back to the preface of this dissertation and my tale of the teenager writing angrily about the *wizdumb* of her teachers and administrators, we might recognize that when a teen makes a magazine during school it is an opportunity. Rather than mark either the instrumentality or impediment to instrumentality that this zine represents with respect to graduation from high school, we could delve into its content as a group. The goal should not be to diminish these kinds of

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291. I am using the term *haeecity* on my own accord. Rancière does not use the term.

292. Rancière, "On Ignorant Schoolmasters," 15-16.

disruptions per se, but to understand their cause, if possible, and to respond in a way that celebrates the process and allows for assertions of creativity that act to change the curriculum. Having outlined some of the background terms involved in the conceptual view of possibility in Rancière and CPI, I will now move on to inquiring into the value of possibility writ large, as well as into the potential issue of valuing it in the wrong way.

Possibility and Expectations of the Other

Rancière and CPI, at least in the sense presented by Kennedy, lead us toward making a space where sporadic disruptions and novel or renewed concepts emerge within a community. As I have tried to show, granting certain values of schooling and philosophy, the best technique for acknowledging power and welcoming emergent properties within the intentional community of any school, traditional or new, is CPI. Referring to Deleuze and Guattari, Storme, and Vlieghe argue that "Philosophy is exactly that practice that makes the experience of the new possible through the creation of concepts."[293] For Storme and Vlieghe, this creation of concepts is feasible only when we are, as they put it in Agamben's terminology, neotenic children.[294] This term is meant to serve as a contrast to the notion of mastery, knowledge, and essentially all that constitutes the police order for Rancière. As Kennedy and Kohan put it, schools can have a role in:

293. Storme and Vlieghe, "The Experience of Childhood and the Learning Society," 24.

294. Storme and Vlieghe, "The Experience of Childhood and the Learning Society," 22.

> emancipatory futurity, a role based on the ongoing historical reconstruction of the adult-child relation as, on one important level, a relation of equals, driven by an awareness of the human dimension of natality, and full of a creative, potentially transformative tension.[295]

This tendency in CPI literature to focus on natality should be of no surprise given that CPI is premised on honoring children and their perspective.[296] Possibility can easily be seen as a characterizing element of youth. However, there is a fine line between respecting possibility and expecting products, change, and outcomes as a result of this possibility.

Indeterminacy is a major part of the value of CPI, and also of the value of philosophical practice implicit in Rancière's *oevre*. Given this language of possibility, one might worry that having any coherent conception of philosophy would be foreclosing on possibility too much.[297] Additionally, it may seem that excessively endorsing possibility for its own sake amounts to relativism, wherein everything (from logical statements to moral norms) is equally possible and plausible. However, what I argue is the most important concern from a Rancièrean perspective is the need to recognize possibility for what it is: not formed, and thus not measurable.

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295. David Kennedy and Walter Kohan, "Gert biesta and philosophical work with children," *childhood & philosophy*, rio de janeiro 13, no. 28 (2017): 409-414, 412.

296. Kennedy further elaborates on the adult-child relation in ideal, dialogic schools that would honor emergence. See David Kennedy, "Neoteny, Dialogic Education, and an Emergent Psychoculture: Notes on Theory and Practice." *Journal of Philosophy of Education* 48, 1 (2014): 100-117.

297. Sevket Benhur Oral, "Can Deweyan Pragmatist Aesthetics Provide a Robust Framework for the Philosophy for Children Programme?" *Studies in Philosophy and Education* 32 (2013): 375; Philip Cam. "Fact, value and philosophy education." *Journal of Philosophy in Schools* 1, no. 1 (2014): 65-66.

It is acknowledged in CPI literature that any proposed ways to support emancipation within schools cannot be overly prescriptive. For example, Lewis' suggestion that laughter can be disruptive and thus political within a classroom is a suggestion, but not one that we can force. Bursts of laughter, as with emancipatory acts writ large, are not genuine when scripted. Comedy and emancipation occur in unexpected ways.[298] We ought to treat the potential emancipation in school as merely possible – not guaranteed, not expected, not planned. Yet even if we prize schools as being uniquely safe spaces for this kind of unregulated possibility, as mentioned in the previous section, there is a danger that we are making schools out to be too pure, and a danger that we are making this possibility into something that we are expecting, that we are wanting to measure, represent, understand.

Ultimately this possibility-focused philosophy ought to maintain an orientation toward something that is out of our control yet that we should live in a kind of accordance with, be it by understanding our place in relation to it or by cultivating respect for it. For Rancière there is a will that we all have, a truth underlying our wills, and a muddled divergence that manifests when we subjectivize and speak. We thus create and recreate difference all the time, and none of it is fixed or essential. If the Other is not essentialized, this is good. Rancière wants us to play around with this, to use this arbitrariness of essence and function to stake claims when necessary. The latter would seem to be an ethical

298. Lewis, *Aesthetics of Education,* 121-133.

imperative, grounded in there being something at stake that is desiring of respect or advocacy. But what grounds it?

The very structure that makes possibility immanent is the feature that guards against relativism or even nihilism: the equality of participants. This equality – not quantified but assumed – is a critical feature for CPI and Rancière.[299] Within both CPI (specifically Kennedy) and Rancière there is this assumption of respect for otherness, for the unknown, the possible, the ineffable, for veracity and for the *thou*.[300] Part of our experience – perhaps all of our material experience – cannot capture truth, cannot represent subjective experience. In the same way that Kennedy proposes alterity as the ground of learning itself, so also do Storme and Vlieghe suggest that education happens in lieu of the desire to be competent, to master the world.[301] Although Rancière does not use the term alterity, I find an analogous notion in his description of his principle of veracity. According to this principle, truth is something with which we each have our own unique relationship,

299. For further consideration of equality within a CPI, see "Does Philosophy Fit in Caxias? A Latin American Project," in *Philosophy in Schools*, 88-89 (Kohan indeed references Rancière in this passage).

300. For Kennedy on the way in which egalitarian dialogue in school can respect "the other as a singularity" see David Kennedy, "An Archetypal Phenomenology of Skholé." *Educational Theory* 67, 3 (December 2017): 273-290.

301. Storme and Vlieghe, "The Experience of Childhood and the Learning Society," 17.

and any attempts to explain this truth are inevitably fruitless.[302] Rancière writes, "what, brings people together, what unites them, is nonaggregation."[303]

While there are commonalities, it is important to recognize what Rancière brings to the table among the CPI advocates who praise possibility. Jasinki and Lewis argue that CPI could do better at highlighting emergence, ambiguity, and immeasurability as the value of CPI. Language itself, they contend, is what triggers emergence, for it is the act of "babbling" or not being understood through language that creates novelty and freedom.[304] On my reading, Rancière represents more of a Rousseauian position wherein it is society itself that entails this friction or incommensurability – not language. In this way, Rancière preserves a deep respect for ontological otherness – other wills – rather than a prioritization of freedom for its own sake. We cannot be free of the Other. Whether it is the burden of society, the problematic philosopher king, the oppressive school district, it is there. The unknown or the Other can be seen as a good, perhaps with moral or ethical implications, and certainly is educative: our freedom comes in choosing how to respond to this Other, and indeed, we can choose to learn from all others and not just authorities.[305] In this way,

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302. Rancière, *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*, 57-60.

303. Rancière, *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*, 58.

304. Babbling is defined as "the margin of voice and speech, experience and language." Igor Jasinski and Tyson Lewis, "Community of Infancy: Suspending the Sovereignty of the Teacher's Voice," *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, vol. 15, no. 4 (2016): 551.

305. Kennedy certainly works with Buber, but I am taking liberty in bringing such notions of the other and ethical imperatives into conversation with Rancière. Samir Haddad considers how shared learning can occur in a classroom characterized by universal

Rancière is not primarily focused on possibility and what kinds of novelty can emerge. Nor is he primarily concerned with amelioration of society. He calls on us to accept the kind of structures inherent in society, to accept their inevitabilities, and to recognize what kind of fundamentally egalitarian principles are at their root. This is a call for us each to challenge our fundamental assumptions about the Other amidst any and all pedagogical implementations, especially CPI.

Conclusion

If one endorses Rancière's critiques of schooling and philosophy, it may be difficult to imagine his ideal, dissensual practice of philosophy ever being authentically implemented in schools. If one recognizes that CPI fits well with Rancière's critiques and norms, then CPI in existing schools or informing the creation of new schools seems to be the most promising way of practicing philosophy in society. In this chapter I have reviewed some reasons for using use CPI to inform the creation of entirely new schools, as well as some reasons we ought to introduce the practice in existing schools. I have also covered some of the drawbacks of each of these endeavors. Despite the inherently imperfect – given the context of schooling itself – execution of CPI, its implementation in existing schools can challenge the way traditional schooling maintains inequality through stultification, the assumption of objective truth that requires explanation, and the promotion of progress via the police order. If used to inform the design of entirely new

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teaching in Samir Haddad. "Shared Learning and The Ignorant Schoolmaster," *Philosophy of Education*, 2015, 175-182.

schools, despite the fact that schools will always entail problems, CPI offers a utopic model for what schools could be, insofar as it is founded on an assumption of equality of intelligence, an acknowledgement of the separation between language and truth, and the values of egalitarianism, assertion, and creativity.

The title of this dissertation refers to the possibility of philosophy in schools in order to provoke consideration as to why philosophy might *not* be possible. The formal structure of CPI can be set up in different kinds of schools, but the philosophy that might transpire will always be limited given the convention of school itself. Truly emergent, democratic, 'childlike' moments break through at random – not at the command of teachers or administrators. Rancière urges us to see that philosophy can happen anywhere, and that it cannot be premeditated or measured. A sustainable whole-school approach, I argue, would be better so that there is no economic, material need to acquire various skills in order to be able to survive once outside the school community. However, even a more radical, self-sufficient school would not rid itself of the problems Rancière points out, given the limitations of social life in general.

Conditions can be set up to be more hospitable to emancipatory moments, more nurturing to its calls, but one must always be vigilant of one's assumptions. There will never be a perfect solution for society, because there is always what Rancière refers to as a miscount: there is always a disparity between our felt, lived truth, and our socially-dependent language, our social roles, and society in general.[306] Schools are social, and in

306. "Politics arises from a count of community "parts," which is always a false count, a double count, or a miscount." Rancière, *Disagreement*, 6.

some ways, philosophy happens in spite of them. CPI advocates would argue that philosophy is certainly possible in schools, particularly when it is viewed as a social project. Thus, one can learn from both Rancière and CPI that philosophy is possible in schools, that philosophy can, should, and certainly will happen in spite of schools. While I have argued that CPI is a preferable practice, the individual practitioner and the assumptions he or she makes have just as much to do with the possibility of philosophy transpiring in a space as do any pedagogies or social structures.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

I came to this project already believing that philosophy in any way, shape, or form would be a good thing in schools, given my own experience as a U.S. public high school student. Ultimately, the project is meant to explore and problematize this goal in order to either strengthen the arguments behind it or abandon it. The intent is to think through how I can truly help students in the way that I wish I had been helped. Is community of philosophical inquiry (CPI) the way to do this? Can one hold to the criticisms of schooling and philosophy as described in Chapters Two and Three and use CPI in new or existing schools without contradicting oneself? In this concluding chapter I reflect on this potential hypocrisy a bit more, but first I share about a recent conversation I had, to provide an example of why I believe this has been a valuable project. I offer some recommendations as to where this research could go next, as well as a reflection on the process of writing the dissertation itself, before summarizing the conclusions I have drawn from this project.

Not long ago, at a university function for work, I met an undergraduate who plans to be both a teacher and a counselor, and who currently works with students of parents who are incarcerated. Seated at a table with this student and a college provost, I was prompted to describe my dissertation research. After hearing my elevator pitch, the student asked me how I defined philosophy. I offered my definition and her reply was “doesn’t that already happen around the kitchen table?” The provost, also an Ethnic Studies professor and

former high school teacher, replied that it is ironic that Rancière critiques philosophers in this way, given that French philosophers are some of the most elite and powerful within French academia. Ultimately, the remarks by my two interlocutors indicated that the effort to bring philosophy into schools does indeed appear as elitist insofar as it assumes that people are not already philosophizing. Further, it would seem that there is some self-contradiction involved in using academic philosophers in order to eventually argue that philosophy can take place outside the academy.

Rancière warns that when philosophers try to 'do good' as philosophers, this is problematic. He boldly professes, "philosophy does not come to anyone's rescue and no one asks it to."[307] If the intent is to be egalitarian, to allow for student assertions to impact practice, and to make space for creativity, any conception of philosophy being promoted must incorporate these values, and the method of implementation must not violate them. There is still a very real need to pinpoint the ways in which CPI challenges the problems inherent in traditional schooling and traditional philosophy. Granted, I did not get to fully defend this view, or to explain CPI to the student or the provost, but their responses can be seen as examples of how those interested in issues of social justice in education might react initially to the idea of bringing philosophy into schools. Moreover, there is a need to stay humble regarding the inclination to try to 'rescue people' with philosophy – even if the inclination comes from ones own experience of wanting to be rescued in this way.

307. Ranciere, *Disagreement*, ix.

As already indicated in the preface, my interest in this general topic began when I was in high school, though it has taken many years for it to become more defined, informed by life experience and exposure to new ideas. I arrived at the academic discipline of philosophy after already having committed to making public schools better places, motivated by my own disappointment in school and my aspiration to contribute to social equity. I was committed to bringing philosophy to high schools prior to my reading of Rancière, yet his criticism of philosophy gave me pause. It was not difficult for me to decide I wanted to write on Rancière, and I had hoped even when applying to my doctoral program that I would be able to integrate my passion for philosophy in schools into my dissertation research.

The dissertation process itself proved to be an extremely challenging undertaking. More than anything else, I have learned the meaning of both resilience and humility. My very early proposal outlines, which I drafted in 2015, were narrowed down over time until my topic was more manageable. Even in my final revisions of the dissertation I have had to become more focused, zeroing in on what I initially thought was too small a contribution. I went down paths of argumentation that I had to abandon, leaving off entire chapters that I thought at one point would figure into the thesis. At one time I was intending to look more broadly at the notion of equality in education by discussing Black Lives Matter and CPI as two case studies on Rancièrian equality. At another I was going to challenge Rancière's reading of Plato, focusing on the notions of *sophrosune* and *ananke*. At yet another, I intended to explore the connection between Rancière, CPI, and philosophical anarchism.

The topic needed to be narrowed, and I have been humbled by the challenge involved in sufficiently addressing even a fraction of what I had originally intended to address.

I am not yet sure what to make of the entire process, but I believe I will need a period of recovery before I can consider writing anything else within academia. Further, I am much less confident about how much integrity one can preserve while trying to argue for bringing philosophy to schools. In the past two years, since defending my proposal, I have held a full-time job and several online adjunct teaching jobs while also somehow writing and editing this dissertation. Perhaps because it has been such a struggle, perhaps because I have been experiencing "senioritus," perhaps because the feeling was there, dormant, all along, I have experienced feelings of entitlement. I have felt irritated by undergraduates who did not seem to respect my experience or the hard work I was putting into my course offerings. I have had feelings of anger at the prospect of having to continue to work very hard if I want to become a faculty member – reflecting the hidden assumption that the degree itself entitles me to any job I want. In short, I have had feelings that I did not expect I would have, feelings that are in direct contrast with the values that I prize in this project, and the values that initially drove me to pursue graduate degrees. Surely these feelings will diminish, but I surely hope that I can authentically use my doctorate to live the values described in this dissertation. Reflecting on the process, what I can say definitively is that the *wizdumb* I was preoccupied with in high school is still very much a concern of mine.

While I may not be engaging in this research myself, there are a few paths one might journey down if inspired to continue this inquiry. More work can be done on the

notion of possibility in Rancière, particularly to bolster a Rancièrian response to CPI advocates who believe possibility itself should be nurtured within schools. It would also be interesting to further explore the way in which philosophy is conceived within the movement to bring philosophy to U.S. K-12 schools. It would also be interesting to compare and contrast Rancière's critique of democracy with arguments regarding the democratic sensibilities that CPI may nurture. Furthermore, there is a subtext to this entire project that I did not get to address, which is that philosophy within academia is a very white, predominately male discipline. This fact should also be addressed before objectively ascertaining whether there are problems with bringing philosophy into schools. In other words, it is understandable that philosophy brought to schools comes across as a colonizing gesture. [308] Diversifying philosophy, not just with respect to who moves through the ranks of academic philosophy but also in who we read as philosophers, is an important endeavor if we want to take the underlying focus on equality seriously within Rancière and CPI studies.

As I have shown, there are commonalities between CPI and Rancière. It would seem that we are left with the idea that CPI might be a good idea and provide for emancipatory moments, but that these moments will still always be in the context of

308. Though I cited this previously, it is worth mentioning again that there is work being done in the area of problematizing the pervasive whiteness found in U.S. CPI literature. For example, see Darren Chetty, "The Elephant in the Room: Picturebooks, Philosophy for Children and Racism." *childhood & philosophy* 10, no. 19 (2014): 11-31. A similar critique also comes up in Gregory, Maughn Rollins. "Philosophy for Children and its Critics." In *Philosophy for Children in Transition: Problems and Prospects*, 30-51. Edited by Nancy Vansieleghem and David Kennedy. Walden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012, 42.

imperfect social institutions (e.g. schools). The way CPI gets justified and introduced is through arguments that it makes more democratic citizens, produces better results, helps students progress, and so on. None of these reasons that are used to justify the practice of CPI fully encapsulate what is good about it. Is CPI still worth doing in U.S. K-12 schools, then? Should Rancière inform CPI?

It is my view that both Rancière's critique and his positive conception of philosophy can be useful in helping us to think about our own use of the term, particularly when advocating for its practice within schools. Rancière brings to light the political commitments entailed by our characterization of the narrow method and practice of philosophy. While one might say that *everything* reflects our political commitments, it appears to me that the focus on philosophy brings to the surface the genuine question as to whether philosophy entails a value-neutral set of skills. Rancière has said of his works that they can be useful in prompting one to reexamine "philosophy's political role," wherein philosophy can be seen as an act of real politics that runs contrary to, or in spite of, the police order.[309] Advocating for philosophy in schools, if we heed Rancière's critique of philosophy, ought to entail a consideration of whether we are endorsing or trying to challenge the police order. How well are we, or can we, philosophize in the Rancièrian fashion while in schools? What does Rancière's critique really do for us if we are still trying to make schools better despite their limitations?

309. Rancière, *On the Shores of Politics,* 4.

As I have argued, CPI can be seen as a response to the problematic elitism, obsession with method, and objective view of truth found in traditional philosophy. Moreover, in the context of schooling, I have argued that the intention of using CPI following Rancière's critiques is to avoid inequality and stultification, and to challenge the police order, in part by rejecting the objective picture of truth, the role of explanation on the part of educators and administrators, and the obsession with progress. Whether we are putting CPI into practice in new or existing schools, we can be mindful of the underlying critiques and values motivating our work.

Critics of traditional philosophy may indeed feel that an appropriate alternative practice ought to be egalitarian rather than elitist, ought to value assertion rather than reified methods, and ought to prize creativity or sitelessness rather than an objective notion of truth. For those who favor this alternative model of philosophy, there may be concern that this simply is not possible in these traditional schools. What I have argued is that this practice of philosophy is largely possible in existing and new schools if one adopts CPI. The question of whether this favored, alternative form of philosophy called CPI is possible in schools should thus be seen as a challenge. As I have shown, possibility is sometimes glorified as a feature we want to preserve in schools, as a kind of hope for change and novelty. Rancière helps us to recognize that ultimately, philosophy is always possible – in schools and out – and it is something that we cannot control, force, or measure. Possibility is not measurable, but more of an assumption. We can implement CPI in order model certain values that philosophy naturally entails, just as we can implement our own

appreciation for possibility – for the unknown, uncontrollable Other that may not need our rescuing.

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