

4-1-2019

# EDUCATION, ORDER, AND THE SPECTER OF EMANCIPATION

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## Recommended Citation

Cameron, Alex B., "EDUCATION, ORDER, AND THE SPECTER OF EMANCIPATION" (2019). *College of Education Theses and Dissertations*. 149.  
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EDUCATION, ORDER, AND THE SPECTER OF EMANCIPATION

A Thesis  
Presented to  
The Faculty of the Graduate Division of  
Social and Cultural Foundations of Education  
College of Education  
DePaul University  
In Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of  
Master of Arts

by

Alex B. Cameron

May, 2019

DePaul University  
Chicago, IL

# EDUCATION, ORDER, AND THE SPECTER OF EMANCIPATION

## Abstract

### Education, Order, and the Specter of Emancipation

Alex B. Cameron

This thesis is a theoretical meditation on the modern project of education. Situated in the broad field of critical studies in education, this work aims to consider the work of Hannah Arendt and Jacques Ranciere in context of the contemporary rationalities and technologies of schooling. By highlighting the modern promise of emancipation against the restraining ideologies and alienation of the world, this thesis proposes a revision and reemphasis on education's possibilities for something radically different. The totalitarianism of the modern laboring society and the rise of technological power channel education's aims to particular ends. The predominance of the market also directs education towards certain goals and modes of being. Through the abovementioned thinkers, the Frankfurt School, other continental philosophers, and critical educational theorists, an emancipatory education outside the dominant order of space and time is proposed.

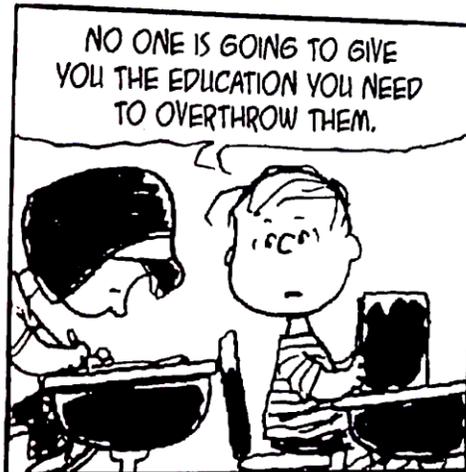
# EDUCATION, ORDER, AND THE SPECTER OF EMANCIPATION

## Acknowledgements

*My parents Karen Hammer Cameron and Ron Cameron  
For their unwavering support my pursuits*

*My chair Dr. Stephen Haymes  
For his ignorant guidance of my intellectual search*

*My committee members  
Dr. Karen Monkman and Dr. Amira Proweller  
For their expertise, assistance, and professionalism*



# EDUCATION, ORDER, AND THE SPECTER OF EMANCIPATION

## Table of Contents

<b>CHAPTER I - INTRODUCTION</b>	4
INTRODUCTION	4
PROBLEM STATEMENT	5
PURPOSE STATEMENT	6
RESEARCH QUESTIONS	6
RATIONALE & SIGNIFICANCE	7
METHODOLOGY	7
LITERATURE REVIEW	8
<i>Alienation</i>	9
<i>Ideology</i>	10
Impact of totalitarian techno-logic	13
Effect of neoliberal economic rationality	15
<i>Emancipation</i>	17
CONCLUSION	20
<b>CHAPTER II - SCHOOLING AND SURVIVAL, TECHNOLOGY AND TOTALITARIANISM</b>	21
INTRODUCTION	21
PART I	21
PART II	28
CONCLUSION	34
<b>CHAPTER III - THE MARKET AND THE SACRED, CONSUMING AND LEARNING</b>	38
INTRODUCTION	38
PART I	38
PART II	42
PART III	45
PART IV	50
CONCLUSION	53
<b>CHAPTER IV - AN EDUCATIONAL TIME AND SPACE, PLURALITY, AND NATALITY</b>	56
INTRODUCTION	56
PART I	56
PART II	61
CONCLUSION	70
<b>CHAPTER V - A NEW EMANCIPATION</b>	71
INTRODUCTION	71
PART I	71
PART II	77
CONCLUSION	85
<b>REFERENCES</b>	88

## Chapter I - Introduction

### Introduction

It has been eight years since stepping foot on DePaul University's campus as a callow 18-year old. Now I have the pleasure to be writing about education as the culmination of my own higher education. As a 'Double Demon', I experienced the big city as a young adult straight out of the midwestern suburbs, as well as an urban educator in the Chicago Public Schools. DePaul and Chicago, has taken what I knew of education, and my pleasure of education, to unforeseen new horizons. With only a vague interest in teaching elementary education and working with children, but a certainty in the value of my own education growing up, I enrolled in the College of Education's teacher prep program. Picking up a deep interest in educational politics and policy along the way, the education I received opened my intellectual interests in fundamental ways.

I began teaching in Chicago Public Schools and within a year was back at DePaul taking courses for professional advancement. A year later, I am enrolled in the Social and Cultural Foundations in Education master's program. Ironically enough, the professor who challenged me in my commonsensical liberal/progressive views on national educational competitiveness and achievement rhetoric as a senior, would broaden my vision of education and become my advisor for this thesis five years later. The coursework and instructors of the SCFE program have challenged, stimulated, and altered the way I understand and experience education and life. The ideas, conversations, fundamental texts, and research articles I engaged with reinforced my passion for education and its essential place in the world. My interest in educational politics and policy, as well as my intellectual curiosity in a variety of disciplines has reinforced my concern around the problems of education. Focusing on education and its 'social' and 'cultural'

## EDUCATION, ORDER, AND THE SPECTER OF EMANCIPATION

foundations through philosophy, political theory, anthropology, and sociology with a critical and post structuralist perspective has led me to this problem statement.

### **Problem Statement**

Education is both problem and solution. Its' great potential and enduring disappointment are universal narratives. Modernity itself is deeply indebted to education and dependent upon education for its progress. The progress of modernity however, is a fraught notion, and history has much to reveal. The contemporary world, a modern project of global capitalism and liberalism, is a dialectic one. Both creative and destructive, immanent and transcendent, liberating and oppressing. The contradictions of modernity are contradictions of education as well. The domination of instrumental reason, technocratic rationality, positivism and individualism are embedded in the world of global capital. Education and schooling reflect the logic of these philosophies and structure society's reproduction.

Education is impacted upon and acts upon the broader society. The world of politics, the economy, mass culture, and technology all condition education or schooling. In turn, education reflects society and reproduces its organization. Two ways contemporary society is organized is through a totalitarian techno-social logic and neoliberal economic rationality. These themes will be expounded upon and related to the world of schooling and education.

The problem is education and its function in contemporary society. The solution can only be education, and through education, the modern project of emancipation, freedom, and equality. Against the irrationality, rituals, and false idols of global techno-capitalism and the violence inherent in its sacral welfare, the ideas and actions of democracy and emancipation must be considered and valued. Education is implicated in obscuring and masking the appearance of the

## EDUCATION, ORDER, AND THE SPECTER OF EMANCIPATION

objective world. It is through schooling that individuals are socialized and opportunities for credentials are distributed dependent upon particular values, ethics, and norms.

Education is a sort-of metonym for the future. The problem of education is a problem of the future. But it also is a problem of the past, of memory, and responsibility. Education fundamentally is about bridging the past to the future, through the present. Not only must education prepare individuals and the society for what lies ahead in terms of skills, dispositions, and knowledge, but the ethics, principles, and history of yesterday. This brings me to the statement of purpose.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this master's thesis is to critically engage and find meaning in exploring modern society's relationship to education and the potential for emancipation. As a work of critical study in education, the aim is to conceptualize education within the broader social and cultural context. Concerned with the assumptions, values, and ethics, this work of theory intends to unmask the power, politics, and narratives around education and schooling. By exploring the hegemonic philosophies and dominant ideologies of the economy and culture, a counter vision for education will be considered. This education of a space and time outside the dominant order is the foundation for democracy and emancipation. Education that emancipates and cultivates new beginnings. Policy for democracy and emancipation, in and through education, is imperative in our contemporary times of globalization, climate change, technological progress, and increasingly dangerous politics.

### **Research Questions**

## EDUCATION, ORDER, AND THE SPECTER OF EMANCIPATION

This research is concerned with the questions: How can education be revised in relation to the global order considering the human condition outlined by Hannah Arendt? And how can education foster emancipation in the vein of Jacques Ranciere?

### **Rationale & Significance**

This research is significant and justified as educational reform is permeated with policies informed by ideologies that are unable to confront the future and support the whole of society. The policies of corporate educational reform reflect the greater culture and economy, both of which, are suffering from decadence and myopia (Blacker, 2013; Giroux, 2001; Saltman, 2014; 2017). Reflecting the instrumentalism and technocratic rationality of the modern, globalized, capitalist world, educational policy must truly progress society instead of reacting and fitting into the current moment. The rationale behind researching education's broader purpose and function is to revise education's relationship to alienation, ideology, order, and emancipation in a theoretical manner. This thesis is specifically significant to the educational work surrounding Hannah Arendt's thinking as well as the in-vogue Jacques Ranciere. The significance stems from the application of their thinking to the contemporary conditions of a totalitarian techno-logic and the universalizing, all-consuming market of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

### **Methodology**

This thesis is a conceptual paper. It is a philosophical inquiry practiced through immanent critique and dialectical thinking (Giroux, 2001). As a mode of critical inquiry, this methodology aims to evaluate the existing realities of education and its logics and rationalities against the ideals, ethics, and values of modernity. By recognizing the constraints and limits put on education by the contemporary conditions of technology, totalitarian forces, and a hegemonic

## EDUCATION, ORDER, AND THE SPECTER OF EMANCIPATION

market of meaning, the application of these thinkers to educational issues is contributing to the body of scholarly knowledge.

### **Outline of Argument**

This thesis is a meditation on the modern project of education and schooling. As such, it is concerned with the understanding and vision of contemporary forms of learning and its function in society. The etymology of enlightenment focuses on illumination or awareness of the present situation; this work is in the tradition of the modern enlightenment. To enlighten or to be enlightened is often a phrase for the act of education itself. Humanize is another synonym; it is no surprise the humanist program is also derived from the same historical period. Modernity and enlightenment have imparted certain values to civilization and society. To continue this ongoing project, those values must be assessed in relation to the concrete conditions of contemporary life. It is this thesis' contention that the values informing contemporary education and schooling are faulty, inappropriate, and unethical (Blacker, 2013; Giroux, 2001; Saltman, 2014; 2017). Illuminating these values through the matrix of politics, economy, culture, and technology, their impact on schooling will be analysed and questioned prior to a proposal for a revision of education and emancipation.

The paper will be framed by an ontological continuum and an epistemological deduction of two themes centered on global order's (politics, economics, culture, and technology) influence on education – the impact of totalitarian techno-logic and the effect of neoliberal economic rationality. The Marxist concept of alienation, ideology, and the enlightenment idea of emancipation, frame the ontological continuum. Considered in a dialectical relationship, the passage of alienation and emancipation will support the analysis of contemporary educational values and policies.

### **Alienation**

Alienation, the individual's existential condition within the capitalist economy and division of labor, is fundamental in recognizing education's function in the order and reproduction of society. Erich Fromm (1961), in *Marx's Concept of Man* writes, "Alienation (or 'estrangement') means, for Marx, that man does not experience himself as the acting agent in his grasp of the world, but that the world (nature, others, and he himself) remain alien to him. They stand above and against him as objects, even though they may be objects of his own creation" (p. 39). The world, i.e. the society produced through the economy, politics, culture, and technology, is acting upon and informing the schooling of the individual. The educated individual must respond, react, and conform to the object-world around him or become a cog in the machine. The passivity inherent in this condition conforms with the passive nature or 'banking' model of modern education (Freire, 1970). This alienated condition of life effects social processes like schooling and imbues particular values. Commenting on the young Marx's *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*, Fromm (1961) continues, "Alienation leads to the perversion of all values. By making economy and its values - "gain, work, thrift, and sobriety" - the supreme aim of life, man fails to develop the truly moral values... (p. 46). These instrumental values, interpellate the educated individual as the economic individual and are subsequently reflected in human capital theory as the *raison d'être* of contemporary schooling. The perversion of values is an important aspect of alienation, but the concept must be interrogated further to provide an adequate framework for the thesis.

As Marx according to Fromm (1961) notes, alienation conditions us away from the humanist goal of 'making history' toward economic values of survival and existence. In focusing life's project to one of subsistence, the individual is impotent in acting towards or striving for

## EDUCATION, ORDER, AND THE SPECTER OF EMANCIPATION

other values. Hannah Arendt (1958) contextualizes Marxist alienation with a more general world alienation resulting from enlightenment knowledge of the immensity of the world and the economic life process of society. The birth of capitalist modernity entailed a small class of property to be of means and of this world, while alienating the vast majority of humanity to expropriation. She writes, “The greatness of Max Weber’s discovery about the origins of capitalism lay precisely in his demonstration that an enormous, strictly mundane activity is possible without any care for or enjoyment of the world whatever, an activity whose deepest motivation, on the contrary, is worry and care about the self. World alienation, and not self-alienation as Marx thought, has been the hallmark of the modern age” (Arendt, 1958, p. 254). Man is able to act, but action directed only towards the care or survival of the self. The vast history of humanity, especially since the modern capitalist epoch, has been subjected to the alienation of a devalued and sacrificial worldlessness. Arendt (1958) continues, “In other words, the process of wealth accumulation, as we know it, stimulated by the life process and in turn stimulating human life, is possible only if the world and the very worldliness of man are sacrificed” (p. 256). Being alienated from the world and sacrificing one’s material connection to the world while simultaneously focusing solely on the “spiritual” soul at work is Arendt’s important dispute. The self- and world-alienation inherent in the modern condition is tempered more or less by ideology.

### **Ideology**

Complicating humanity’s project of emancipation is ideology. Ideology has its roots in religion and is essentially concerned with the meaning of life to a society. Religion is inherently social, and mythologies narrate the way humans interact with each other and the broader world. Emile Durkheim (1912) writes, “In mythologies we forever encounter beings who

## EDUCATION, ORDER, AND THE SPECTER OF EMANCIPATION

simultaneously possess the most contradictory attributes, who are at once one and many, material and spiritual, who can be infinitely subdivided without losing anything essential. In mythology it is axiomatic that the part is equal to the whole” (Durkheim, 1912, p. 14). This recognition can be applied to our modern times and the supposed secular western society. The contradiction of part equaling the whole will be supplemented a few decades later. Durkheim (1912) also understands the alienated condition of man. In *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* he writes, “Within him are two beings: an individual being that originates in the organism and whose sphere of action is strictly limited by this fact; and a social beings that represents within us the higher reality of the intellectual and moral order that we know through observation - by which I mean society” (Durkheim, 1912, p. 18). The duality of animalistic individual and social being is a central to mythology and arguably for alienation. The ability to act as an individual is stifled by the social world around us. As a system of ideas and ways of thinking, ideology develops and reinforces the mythological base of society.

Antonio Gramsci (1971) considered ideology to be dependent upon historical, material, and social conditions of existence. By posing consciousness as the site of ideology, and the possibility of struggle or contradiction, he centers his thinking on human subjectivity and agency. Commenting on the Marxist interpretation of ideology as a negative value judgement, its distinction from structure, and its assertion that ideology is ‘pure’ appearance and useless, Gramsci counters with an important idea. He writes, “One must therefore distinguish between historically organic ideologies, those, that is, which are necessary to a given structure, and ideologies that are arbitrary, rationalistic, or “willed”. To the extent that ideologies are historically necessary they have a validity...; they “organise” human masses, and create the terrain on which men move, acquire consciousness of their position, struggle, etc” (Gramsci,

## EDUCATION, ORDER, AND THE SPECTER OF EMANCIPATION

1971, p. 377). This understanding of ideology, its quality of being struggled and moved against, will be helpful in thinking about emancipation later. The moving against hegemonic ideology, against the authority of the consensus will also ground the argument for emancipation. Gramsci (1971) writes, “That aspect of the modern crisis... is called the “crisis of authority”. If the ruling class has lost its consensus, i.e. is no longer “leading” but only dominant, exercising coercive force along, this means precisely that the great masses have become detached from their traditional ideologies, and no longer believe what they used to believe previously, etc” (p. 276). The inherent understanding that ideology is critical to social consensus, which is rooted in mythology, is made explicit in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*.

Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer (1944) in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* highlight the connections between religion, myth and ideology. On the intertwinement of myth, enlightenment, and ideology, they write, “Just as myths already entail enlightenment, with every step enlightenment entangles itself more deeply in mythology. Receiving all its subject matter from myths, in order to destroy them, it falls as judge under the spell of myth” (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1944, p. 8). By raising individual reason to the transcendence of God, the enlightenment project mystifies the whole just as it is trying to make the world lucid. This has major implications for man’s alienation, ideology, and prospects for emancipation. Adorno and Horkheimer (1944) write, “By subordinating life in its entirety to the requirements of its preservation, the controlling minority guarantees, with its own security, the continuation of the whole” (p. 24). Instead of liberating humanity from the obscure complexity of pre-modern life, the process of enlightened reason advances toward the irrational, totalitarian-esque modern world. As the intellectuals from the Frankfurt School recognized, the virtue of self-preservation

## EDUCATION, ORDER, AND THE SPECTER OF EMANCIPATION

led to a dogmatic supremacy of economy over democracy and corrupted any other competing values. The state and society built upon economic domination is explained further.

Louis Althusser (1971) builds on Gramsci and Adorno and Horkheimer's understanding of ideology in his seminal *Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses*. Contrasting ideological state apparatuses (ISAs) with repressive state apparatuses like the police or army, Althusser (1971) argues that the educational state apparatuses (e.g. schools) are the most powerful institutions in the reproduction of society. They reproduce the capitalist relations of production/exploitation through school-based class sorting and the distribution of skills, dispositions, attitudes, and virtues. Ideology, he argues, is thus a representation of "the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence" (Althusser, 1971, p. 36). He continues, "What is represented in ideology is therefore not the system of the real relations which govern the existence of individuals, but the imaginary relation of those individuals to the real relations in which they live" (Althusser, 1971, p. 39). Like Gramsci before, he also notes the material existence of ideology. Finally, "ideology 'acts' or 'functions' in such a way that it 'recruits' subjects among individuals (it recruits them all), or 'transforms' the individuals into subjects (it transforms them all) by that very precise operation which I have called *interpellation...*" (Althusser, 1971, p. 48). This leads to an important conclusion for alienation, the function of ideology, and emancipation. Namely, the elusive nature of ideology or the 'denigration' of the role ideology plays to individual subjects. This recognition of religion, myth, and ideology will support concerns for emancipation from them.

### **Impact of totalitarian techno-logic**

Two thinkers will frame the thesis around the ideology of totalitarianism. Not as an explicit political system but an essential enlightenment-influenced modern social condition.

## EDUCATION, ORDER, AND THE SPECTER OF EMANCIPATION

Hannah Arendt's (1951) *On the Origins of Totalitarianism* and Herbert Marcuse's (1964) *One-Dimensional Man* will support arguments around technology's function in society and education, social control through benign institutions, and power relations in our post-democratic culture. Marcuse (1964) states, "By virtue of the way it has organized its technological base, contemporary industrial society tends to be totalitarian. For "totalitarian" is not only a terroristic political coordination of society, but also a non-terroristic economic-technical coordination which operates through the manipulation of needs by vested interest. It thus precludes the emergence of an effective oppositions against the whole" (p. 3). The preclusion of opposition will be something to focus on as technology's exponential progression since the mid-20th century only exacerbates the tendencies these thinkers perceived. The pervasiveness of screens, digital technology, information technology, and automation, just to name a few aspects, are fundamental to the totalitarian logic identified. Arendt (1951) notes, "Totalitarianism is never content to rule by external means, namely, through the state and a machinery of violence; thanks to its peculiar ideology and the role assigned to it in this apparatus of coercion, totalitarianism has discovered a means of dominating and terrorizing human beings from within" (p. 325). The unprecedented wedding of man and tech in our contemporary era is a major theme of this thesis. Current accounts of technology's increased role in society and its underlying logic of schooling will be addressed.

The ideology of totalitarian social logic undergirding modern political culture is also an important quality of contemporary schooling. Arendt (1951) writes, "Their idea of domination was something that no state and no mere apparatus of violence can ever achieve, but only a movement that is constantly kept in motion: namely, the permanent domination of each single individual in each and every sphere of life" (p. 326). Totalitarian domination, or inverted

## EDUCATION, ORDER, AND THE SPECTER OF EMANCIPATION

totalitarianism, as Sheldon Wolin (2008) contends in *Democracy Inc.: Managed Democracy and the Specter of Inverted Totalitarianism*, is similar but different in its contemporary form than its Stalinist or Nazi origin. However, its essence is in massification, bureaucratization, and centralization overcoming the individual. The anonymous authority of corporate, 'private' totalitarianism is even more apparent in Wolin's (2008) account. Through inversion, totalitarian logic is even more potent and conducive to social control as globalized, 'anonymous' corporations have co-opted the state, politics, and mass culture.

### **Effect of neoliberal economic rationality**

The rise of neoliberalism is an inflection point in the development of political-economic ideology bearing the reproduction of capitalism. Dating to the 1970's, the ideology and rationality coincides with economic crises around the world and the intensified globalization process. This shift in hegemonic rule, reordered the relationship between state and economy, capital and labor, and the market's role in all. David Harvey (2005) in *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* notes that neoliberalism is the political ideology centered around the restoration of capital and the ruling class' power in the world. Countering the strides made through the early and mid-20th century by class struggle and a welfare, not just warfare, state, the restoration of private power and capital is still strangling humanity. Harvey (2005) writes, "As the state withdraws from welfare provision and diminished its role in arenas... The social safety net is reduced to a bare minimum in favour of a system that emphasizes personal responsibility. Personal failure is generally attributed to personal failings, and the victim is all too often blamed (p. 76). The results of close to half a century of neoliberal rationality in politics and the economy has immiserated the masses while enriching an increasingly small elite. As a ruling ideology, its successes are numerous and ubiquitous, it seems truly totalitarian and acquiescent. The

## EDUCATION, ORDER, AND THE SPECTER OF EMANCIPATION

underlying ideology of neoliberalism informs schooling and education. The diminished state provision for k-12 as well as higher education is regarded as opportunity for private power, the market, and freedom to prosper. Privatization is largely the most significant feature of neoliberalism, especially in education.

Privatization and ensuing commodification, marketization are the economic rationalities behind the whole of social reality. Schooling, which primarily reproduces the existing economic order, is progressively contributing to the social inequalities nationally and globally; additionally through the ideology of neoliberalism, enriching the few while immiserating the masses. Harvey (2005) writes, “With some 2 billion people condemned to live on less than \$2 a day, the taunting world of capitalist consumer culture... and the self-congratulatory polemics of the emancipatory potential of neoliberalization, privatization, and personal responsibility must seem like a cruel joke” (p. 171). The poverty of the world is punctured by the spectacle of markets and commodities. Commodification through freedom of the markets is reaching totalitarian heights or perhaps depths of human relations. In *Consuming Life*, Zygmunt Bauman (2009) notes, “And the commodity they are prompted to put on the market, promote and sell are *themselves*. They are, simultaneously, *promoters of commodities* and the *commodities they promote*... The test they need to pass in order to be admitted to the social prizes they covet demands them to *recast themselves as commodities*: that is, as products capable of catching the attention and attracting *demand and customers*” (Bauman, 2009, p. 6). The commodification and marketization of all life is an explicit political program to restore power to the ruling class. By increasing the social responsibility of the individual, the entrepreneurial cult of the self, and role of private power, neoliberalism is the hegemonic politico-economic ideology.

## EDUCATION, ORDER, AND THE SPECTER OF EMANCIPATION

In *Global Capitalism and the Crisis of Humanity*, William Robinson (2014) states, “Neoliberalism is a concrete program and also an ideology, a culture, a philosophical worldview that takes classical liberalism and individualism to the extreme. It glorifies the detached, isolated individual - a fictitious state of human existence - and his or her creative potential that is allegedly unleashed when unencumbered by state regulation and other collective constraints on “freedom” (p. 54). The culture of neoliberalism, with its focus on the individual freedom of consuming commodities and conversely, the individual becoming commodity, has numerous implications for the vision and purpose of schooling.

### **Emancipation**

The final part of the thesis will discuss a revisioning of education, taking into account the philosophical framework and themes reviewed previously. Returning to the utmost and ever-relevant Hannah Arendt, education for and as emancipation will ground the revision. In *The Human Condition*, Arendt (1958) argues that a specific rise of the social out of the public and private realms condition the individual’s emancipation. Emancipation is the action or speech disclosed in a plural community. She writes, “Plurality is the condition of human action because we are all the same, that is, human, in such a way that nobody is ever the same as anyone else who ever lived, lives, or will live” (Arendt, 1958, p. 8). Acting in the public realm is the ultimate expression of freedom or emancipation. The encroachment of the social into public and private realms has serious implications for emancipation, natality, and the uniqueness of the human condition. The social or rise of society is the tyrannical no-man rule, a total equalization of all circumstances through a withering of the public realm and a penetration of the private (Arendt, 1958).

## EDUCATION, ORDER, AND THE SPECTER OF EMANCIPATION

In *Between Past and Future* (1961) Arendt applies her thinking on public, private, and the social as well as action and plurality to the crisis of modern education. The opportunity of crisis, for her, is the tearing away of facade and prejudice. Education is at its essence, concerned with natality and the act of being born into the world (Arendt, 1961). She notes, “It is in the very nature of the human condition that each new generation grows into an old world, so that to prepare a new generation for a new world can only mean that one wishes to strike from the newcomers’ hands their own chance at the new” (Arendt, 1961, p. 174). This conception of education and natality, being born into the world as a unique individual with an ability to act, is the foundation of the revision of education for emancipation. Paradoxically, this is a practice of educational conservatism. Arendt (1961) writes, “Exactly for the sake of what is new and revolutionary in every child, education must be conservative; it must preserve this newness and introduce it as a new thing in an old world...” (p. 189). To resist the themes elucidated prior, as a consequence of the rise of the social, education and emancipation must reflect the profundity of Arendt’s insights.

Complementing Arendt’s thinking around plurality, action, and education as beginning is the critical pedagogy of Paulo Freire. Like Arendt, Freire is concerned with the humanization of individuals under the hegemony of the social or the massification of society. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1968) examines education as a project of liberation, of becoming, and of shedding oppressive consciousness. Against a certain mode of schooling, he writes, “This is the “banking” concept of education, in which the scope of action allowed to the students extends only as far as receiving, filing, and storing the deposits... For apart from inquiry, apart from the praxis, individuals cannot be truly human” (Freire, 1968, p. 72). The intaking and regurgitating of knowledge or information is the primary mechanism of all schooling, and especially true for

## EDUCATION, ORDER, AND THE SPECTER OF EMANCIPATION

radically oppressive ones. Echoing Arendt, Freire writes, “[education affirms] the process of *becoming* - as unfinished, uncompleted beings in and with a likewise unfinished reality... people know themselves to be unfinished; they are aware of their incompleteness. In this incompleteness and this awareness lie the very roots of education as an exclusively human manifestation” (p. 84). As the leading light of the school of critical pedagogy, Freire’s writings will inform the thesis on the possibility of emancipation, an education of “I wonder and not merely I do” (Freire, 1974) and one that is an act of love and courage.

Furthering Arendt and Freire’s conceptions of emancipatory education is Jacques Ranciere’s (1991) *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*. Against explication which leads to stultification and learning that affirms the inequality of intelligence, Ranciere (1991) argues for the radical presumptive equality of intelligence. He writes, “The pedagogical myth, we said, divides the world into two. More precisely, it divides intelligence into two. It says that there is an inferior intelligence and a superior one” (Ranciere, 1991, p. 7). Only through a discarding of this illusion can individuals emancipate themselves. By asserting their equality of intelligence, through disclosure of action or speech, emancipation can occur. Ranciere (1991) argues, “There cannot be a class of the emancipated, an assembly or a society of the emancipated. But an individual can always, at any moment, be emancipated and emancipate someone else, announce to others the *practice* and add to the number of people who know themselves as such and who no longer play the comedy of inferior superiors” (p. 98). The infinite regression of inferior superiors that comprise a society of inequality must be resisted and struggled against but cannot be institutionalized. The possibility of individual emancipation, will be the central theme of education against the aforementioned themes and global order. The theme will be expanded upon and contrasted with other logics of learning, schooling, and education.

### **Conclusion**

In sum, this thesis holds on to radical possibilities of emancipation within the current global order and humanity's condition. Setting the goal of education toward emancipation is ambitious but necessary considering the contemporary conditions of schooling. Aiming toward values not subordinate to the drive for profit, greed, survival, exploitation, and destruction is an imperative. A revision of educational policy, informed by radical values antithetical to the global order's status quo, is one small step toward a better future, one with possibilities and opportunities for all, not just the historically self-preserved few. This thesis is grounded in the critical theory paradigm. This paradigm, influenced through Marxist scholarship, the Frankfurt School, and other Continental thinkers, is fundamentally concerned with the gap between the existing reality and the reality that might be. Henry Giroux (2001) writes, "How do we make education meaningful by making it critical, and how do we make it critical so as to make it emancipatory" (p. 3). Through thinking about education and social-cultural engagement as a site of politics, this thesis intends to use theory as an "unmasking function" (Giroux, 2001) to get to the root of educational issues. By perceiving the gap between appearance and essence, as well as the underlying social relationships at play, the opportunity for human agency and struggle may be preconditioned. There is a specter haunting the world today; the specter of emancipation. Education's capacity and responsibility for this once-thought-dead phantom is paramount.

## Chapter II - Schooling and Survival, Technology and Totalitarianism

### Introduction

Chapter two aims to locate the connections between totalitarian society, the one-dimensionality of technological reason, and the implications for education. Introducing Jacques Ranciere's (1999) *Disagreements* and his understanding of political order will set the stage for a return in chapter five. From there, Hannah Arendt's (1951) *The Origins of Totalitarianism* and Sheldon Wolin's (2008) *Democracy Incorporated* will help characterize the perhaps-not-overt totalitarianism of contemporary society. The rise of the laboring society and an over determination of life towards providing the necessities in Arendt's (1958) *The Human Condition* will ground understanding of contemporary education and learning. Finally, Herbert Marcuse's (1964) *One-Dimensional Man* will support arguments about the rise of technological totalitarianism, a domination that intends on not just conforming human behavior but automating it. These particular aspects shape and form the way schooling is considered in our contemporary life. Sketching this picture will enable a fuller revision of education in chapters four and five. Part I begins with an exploration of schooling and its relation to the political whole of society through Ranciere to Arendt to establish the dominant logic of learning in contemporary education.

### Part I

Education and the schooling system can be understood as the distribution of knowledge throughout society. The question of who receives what kind of knowledge and how they receive it is a major concern of this chapter. Tracing back the question of society and education to Plato's Republic, contemporary questions of education will be grounded in the ideals of the paramount Western thinker. In *Disagreement*, Jacques Ranciere (1999) states, "This republic is

## EDUCATION, ORDER, AND THE SPECTER OF EMANCIPATION

not so much based on law as a universal as on the education that constantly translates the law into its spirit... He invents the sciences that go with this internalization of the bond of community, those sciences of the individual and collective soul that modernity will call psychology and sociology” (p. 68). Ranciere considers this *archipolitics* where the community or society is at ease with each individual allotted a position in society and is content with its’ part of the whole. He continues, “The centrality of *paideia* also means the primacy of harmonizing individual personality and collective morality throughout the entire distribution of knowledge” (Ranciere, 1999, p. 69). This harmonious whole of society is achieved through the continual *explication* or explaining of social order. Through education, order is understood and made clear to all parts of the social whole. Contemporary schools still function primarily through this logic.

Despite the *educationalizing* of society, or the recourse of school to solve social problems (Labaree, 2008; 2012), institutions of education primarily function to reproduce the existent social order. Schooling may provide opportunities to solve social ills through reform or access to mobility, and essentially stabilizes the whole of society (Labaree, 2008; 2012). The long history of social reproduction theories of education spell out the role of schools in developing individuals in accordance to their position in society (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1970; Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Giroux, 2001). This reproduction is no secret, however it does concur with Ranciere’s conception of *police order*.

The *police order*, is the Republic-notion of state and society. It is the system of distribution and legitimation of power, places, and roles. Ranciere’s understanding of education and the school is one where the distribution of knowledge, which leads to legitimation of power and place, is a totality and each individual or class identifies with the social order because of their particular schooling. He writes, “The police is thus first an order of bodies that defines the

## EDUCATION, ORDER, AND THE SPECTER OF EMANCIPATION

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...”

(Ranciere, 1999, p. 29). Education in the *police order* will always serve order and the totality while potentially helping the individual or even more remotely, ameliorating social ills.

Education, as an explication of the social order, distributes just the right amount of knowledge that is necessary for the community or the whole to function. Education explains to each person their place in the order of knowledge, all the while promoting the material betterment of the people. It educates citizen and performs explanations that echo the political ordering of society (Bingham, 2010).

Education performs three functions in its task of performing *police order*. Biesta (2010) affirms the functions of qualification, socialization, and subjectification. The three form a composite of the institution’s purpose in the system or *police order*. Qualification refers to the particular distribution and recognition of skills, interests and dispositions in order to perform a role in society. Socialization is the pedagogical process of transmitting norms and values of specific social, cultural, and political orders. And subjectification refers to the individuating necessary, and so often lacking, of becoming a unique, autonomous being (Biesta, 2010, p. 21). This final function will be explored further in the fourth and fifth chapters. Qualification and socialization are the primary drivers of education in the *police order*. This is why Arendt (1951) astutely, as always, points out, “The elite is not composed of ideologists; its members’ whole education is aimed at abolishing their capacity for distinguishing between truth and falsehood, between reality and fiction” (p. 385). The distribution of knowledge and power at all positions of social order is intended to reproduce, which entails not a pursuit of truth or value, but power

## EDUCATION, ORDER, AND THE SPECTER OF EMANCIPATION

dynamics. Always contributing to the whole or total, education's distribution of possibilities and legitimation of social position will never upend or challenge order.

Returning to Ranciere's conception of Plato's Republic, the framework outlined can be considered a prototype of the totalitarian society. And as discussed in the proposal, the institution or apparatus of education as Althusser (1971) contends, is the fundamental site of ideological reproduction or interpellation of individuals. So, in the totalitarian society, schooling is of the utmost concern. Sheldon Wolin (2008) contends modern society to be a system of *inverted totalitarianism*. He writes, "Unlike the classic totalitarian regimes which lost no opportunity for dramatizing and insisting upon a radical transformation... inverted totalitarianism has emerged imperceptibly, unpremeditatedly, and in seeming unbroken continuity..." (Wolin, 2008, p. 46). Inverted totalitarianism still consists of many characteristics of classic totalitarian regimes like *total* coordination to realize a social whole, but the appearance of this form is often inexplicable. Fundamentally, inverted totalitarianism is characterized by an elevation of economics over politics, systemic corruption, and a vision of the limitless (Wolin, 2008). Contemporary schooling reflects this totalitarian logic in its' reproduction of society and the particular social relationships that drive its propagation.

Inverted totalitarianism, although markedly different from the horror regimes of the 20th century, is focused on mobilizing the individual for the sake of the economy. Wolin (2008) notes the contemporary state is one that is dominated by private corporate interests; the masses are enlisted not so much in service of the state (i.e. public service, military service, etc.) but are directed towards private pleasures and consumption. Nonetheless, domination and mobilization are fundamental qualities of totalitarianism - inverted or otherwise. Arendt (1951) writes, "Totalitarianism is never content to rule by external means, namely, through the state and a

## EDUCATION, ORDER, AND THE SPECTER OF EMANCIPATION

machinery of violence; thanks to its peculiar ideology and the role assigned to it in this apparatus of coercion, totalitarianism has discovered a means of dominating and terrorizing human beings from within” (p. 325). This internal domination, is part and parcel of education’s function in the *police order*.

Although coercion and terror will seem an unjust description of the modern, “democratic”, western regime, this thesis contends that is exactly what is occurring today in the guise of “freedom”, “choice”, “markets”, and “security”. She continues, “Their idea of domination was something that no state and no mere apparatus of violence can ever achieve, but only a movement that is constantly kept in motion: namely, the permanent domination of each single individual in each and every sphere of life” (Arendt, 1951, p. 326). Arguably more dominated and mobilized than ever, the masses in the inverted totalitarian society are kept in motion through the rise of the precarious, information economy and big tech. This will be explored next section, but it is important to recognize education’s role in the internal coercion and mobilization inherent in our contemporary situation. Arendt’s (1958) victory of the laboring society will support this claim.

In her conclusion of *The Human Condition*, which elucidates the three essential aspects of the active life or *vita activa*, Arendt asserts the supremacy of labor over all human activity. “Labor is the activity which corresponds to the biological process of the human body, whose spontaneous growth, metabolism, and eventual decay are bound to vital necessities produced and fed into the life process by labor” (Arendt, 1958, p. 7). Over the *work* of the world, and the *action* of great deeds and freedom, *labor* and the necessity of production and consumption rules the modern world. She states, “...we have almost succeeded in leveling all human activities to the common denominator of securing the necessities of life and providing for their abundance.

## EDUCATION, ORDER, AND THE SPECTER OF EMANCIPATION

Whatever we do, we are supposed to do for the sake of “making a living” (Arendt, 1958, p. 126-127). While labor has largely been emancipated from oppression and exploitation, she argues, there has not been a proportional development in freedom. “It is as though the growing elimination of violence throughout the modern age almost automatically opened the doors of the re-entry of necessity of its most elementary level” (Arendt, 1958, p. 130). The ubiquity of necessity, even in the age of abundance, and its concomitant sole focus of life to “make a living” informs education’s purpose and function. Consequently, the laboring society has transformed into the learning society in our contemporary context of globalization and information economy.

As the laboring society is enslaved to necessity and the metabolism of bare life, the learning society is enslaved to the permanent process of learning. Just as the ascendance of labor and the leveling of all society toward maintaining life in the absence of oppression or exploitation, learning has become the dominant logic in contemporary schooling. Masschelein (2001) notes, “Learning is a permanent activity, it lasts through one’s entire life: it is lifelong. In fact: living is learning and learning is living” (p. 5). The permanence of necessity in the life cycle is mirrored in the permanence of learning as a lifelong endeavor. Adjustment to whatever change in the economy, technology, or macro-force like globalization necessitates the constant meeting of new needs, and self-preservation.

Learning, not teaching, is a facilitated - not directed - education beginning with needs through an active process of fetishized problem solving (Masschelein, 2001). Learning is about survival, of preserving the self in the metabolic process of life. “Put differently, we can say that in a learning society we live in a situation of permanent threat: threatened in our survival, threatened with exclusion, with no possibility of appeal. We are put in the situation of continually having to solve problems, and that is what is *meant* by ‘learning’” (Masschelein,

## EDUCATION, ORDER, AND THE SPECTER OF EMANCIPATION

2001, p. 12). The constant mobilization and internal coercion inherent in totalitarian societies that Arendt (1951) identified is, in the learning society, the frenzied activity of lifelong learning that torments all. “When ‘life’ assumes center place, activity and participation also become central... Learners are the energetic, working, autonomous individuals who are ready to change and learn even in case of unemployment or social failure; who are willing to be active, even when they are poor or when they fail” (Masschelein, 2001, p. 14). This active learning process of survival is not an end in and of itself nor a goal; it affirms Biesta’s (2010) claim about the function of education that lacks vision but is concerned with the socialization and qualification of individuals. “In other words we could say that the discourse of the learning society ushers in what could be called a ‘soft totalitarianism’ which constricts the imagination and inhibits our longing for something totally different from the given. In the learning society we seem to live permanently under the threat of being excluded from the community or from society without having the opportunity to lodge an appeal” (Masschelein, 2001, p. 3). Masschelein is fundamentally correct and this thesis considers ‘soft totalitarianism’ an imprecise claim. Education’s function in Wolin’s (2008) totalitarianism is much harder or overt, even if it is inverted. The disclosing of possible futures, the inability to imagine other educations, and the inhibition of the educated individual will be addressed in chapter four and five.

In sum, contemporary education is rife with impediments to emancipation. From Ranciere’s insights into Plato’s Republic and the explanatory role of inequality in the school to Arendt’s formulation of the rise of the laboring society and the self-preserving drive to learn. The inverted totalitarianism of current society informs education in all facets. Biesta (2006) refers to this as the TINA (there is no alternative) understanding of education. “The TINA creed suggests that the global economy is simply a reality to which we must adjust our educational efforts, and

## EDUCATION, ORDER, AND THE SPECTER OF EMANCIPATION

not something that is actually desired by some to serve particular interests” (Biesta, 2006, p. 98). This TINA meme is supported by the complete and total focus on education as a technological process, as an instrument to achieve the predetermined ends of distribution of knowledge or lifelong learning (Biesta, 2006). The technological approach to education will be explored in the part II. By establishing the totalitarian nature of the learning society, the technological domination of learners through Marcuse will be explored further.

### **Part II**

The instrumental approach, as elucidated through the particular distribution of knowledge and the lifelong learning ethic, are part of a broader technological mode of life characterizing the contemporary world. Biesta (2006) notes that the aforementioned essence(s) of modern education are concerned with the efficiency and effectivity of the educational process. He writes, “The technological attitude toward education, the idea that education is a means or an instrument that can be used to bring about certain predetermined ends, has many different faces” (Biesta, 2006, p. 73). The technological approach is concerned with norm and deviant development, of particular progressions, and specific outcomes of the process. “The problem, however, is that “effectiveness” is an *instrumental* value, a value that expresses something about the quality of *processes* and, more specifically, about their ability to bring about certain outcomes in a secure way” (Biesta, 2010, p. 14). The technical order of society, the rise of digital technology, and the concrete use of technology in schooling will all be explored. Tech is totalitarian in the 21st century, and the rise of technique since the dawn of the modern age has predetermined this.

The burgeoning of technological power to totalitarian heights indicates an unprecedented domination, control, and standardization of the economy and society. Not only fundamental to modes of thinking and being, the development of technological tools poses new contradictions to

## EDUCATION, ORDER, AND THE SPECTER OF EMANCIPATION

humanity. Marcuse (1964) states, “The more rational, productive, technical, and total the repressive administration of society becomes, the more unimaginable the means and ways by which the administered individuals might break their servitude and seize their own liberation” (p. 7). The concern around a totalitarian-technological society is the real lack of autonomy, freedom, or ‘liberation’ as Marcuse refers. Conventionally understood as being ‘cogs-in-the-machine’ or simply ‘the system’, this widespread assumption about modern life is due to the instrumental nature of reason born out of the modern age (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1944; Marcuse, 1964). Instrumentalism, and the being ‘an instrument’ of predetermined ends, does not spell the bleakness and drudgery that often comes to mind when the term totalitarian is thrown around. In fact Marcuse (1964) writes, “When this point is reached, domination - in the guise of affluence and liberty - extends to all spheres of private and public existence, integrates all authentic opposition, absorbs all alternatives. Technological rationality reveals its political character as it becomes the great vehicle of better domination, creating a truly totalitarian universe in which society and nature, mind and body are kept in a state of permanent mobilization for the defense of this universe” (Marcuse, 1964, p. 18). It is this point, of domination and mobilization in the guise of freedom, in private, public, and social realms, that technology has to be reckoned as totalitarian.

The totalitarian nature of the technological society has taken a dark twist in the 21st century in the guise of increased personalization and freedom. With the rise of digital tech, ICT, and the internet, humanity has seemingly become enslaved by its technologies as opposed to this innovation spurring liberation. Zuboff (2019) argues that the progress of what she terms ‘surveillance capitalism’ resulted from the new power in searching the internet, online advertising, and data science. Along with new developments in automation and the importance

## EDUCATION, ORDER, AND THE SPECTER OF EMANCIPATION

of information to the economy, the individual has been subordinated to a new logic of accumulation by dispossession, a new market, and a new economic order (Zuboff, 2019). The freedom of information and communication, as well as the increased personalization on the surface was undergirded by a concentrated flow of private, personal, behavioral data to obscure Silicon Valley monoliths. Once considered free online services have quickly morphed into free flows of information from the user to the provider. She notes, “Instead we are exiles from our own behaviour, denied access to or control over knowledge derived from its dispossession by others for others. Knowledge, authority and power rest with surveillance capital, for which we are merely “human natural resources” (Zuboff, 2019). In the totalitarian technological world, the domination and expropriation of private experience for profit only precurses what's next - automation. Terrifyingly, Zuboff (2019) argues that the disclosure of vast amounts of behavioral data and the automation of information flows lead to the automation of human behavior. Shifting from the prediction of behavior for data markets, the automated processes of big tech that elide conventional understanding and awareness are directed to engineering future behavior. This is totalitarian technology in the 21st century and it spells disaster for any possibility of democracy, radical education, or emancipation.

Returning to Arendt, the progress of technology’s domination in all spheres of our life is a consequence of the rise of the social. The growth of surveillance capitalism, with the advent of the internet and big data, is a manifestation of Arendt’s social rule. She writes, “The social realm, where the life process has established its own public domain, has let loose an unnatural growth, so to speak, of the natural; and it is against this growth, not merely against society but against a constantly growing social realm, that the private and intimate... have proved incapable of defending themselves” (Arendt, 1958, p. 47). All public and private matters, have been

## EDUCATION, ORDER, AND THE SPECTER OF EMANCIPATION

subsumed by a techno-driven social realm characterized by equivalence, uniformity, and conformism. Survival and necessity, as Arendt contends, is contemporarily felt as the widespread economy of precarity and flexibility introduced through the total dominance of technology. Rule by technology is a certain kind of no-man's rule. Arendt (1958) warns of the viciousness of no-man rule of modern bureaucratic-corporate government, "As we know from the most social form of government, that is, from bureaucracy, the rule by nobody is not necessarily no-rule; it may indeed, under certain circumstances, even turn out to be one of its cruelest and most tyrannical versions" (Arendt, 1958, p. 40). Bureaucracy entails organization and statistics to deal with the masses of social life, both public and private. Arendt (1958) argues this is a reductive, mathematical treatment of reality. Conformism, behaviorism, and automatism are the natural consequences of this approach to social phenomena. Technological bureaucracy informs society's ways of thinking, being, and doing. It is totalitarian and stifles much resistance, engulfing any alternative mode or struggle.

Adorno and Horkheimer's *Dialectic of Enlightenment* offers a critique of the positivist, progressive conception of tradition-breaking modernity, arguing for the totalitarian nature of instrumental reason and the ensuing barbarity it incited. As an approach to social life, instrumental reason or calculating, computing reason encompasses all other forms of thought. Bridle (2018) claims, "Computation does not merely augment, frame, and shape culture; by operating beneath our everyday, casual awareness of it, it actually *becomes* culture" (p. 39). He continues, arguing that computation and calculation replace thought and thinking becomes machine-like (Bridle, 2018). This computation and calculation, a symptom of the totalitarian nature of technological reason, is the dialectical obverse of the liberating reason of modernity and enlightenment. Computation and calculation as modes of thinking and being, are

## EDUCATION, ORDER, AND THE SPECTER OF EMANCIPATION

consequences of Arendt's rise of the social realm, with economics and masses as the primary objects of understanding for totalitarian bureaucracy. The resulting outcome, as Zuboff (2018) contends, is a social-economic order of data.

The development of certain technologies like the printing press and modern scientific tools enabled the enlightenment to initially occur. The immanent, creative, and liberatory enlightenment of early modernity, through the rise of technologies, eventually morphed into or, *dialectically* progressed into a transcendent totality. This totality, and the ensuing development of digital technology, Han (2017) argues, is a second enlightenment. He writes, "Dataism has taken the state with the fervour of a *second Enlightenment*. During the *first Enlightenment*, statistics was thought to possess the capacity to liberate human knowledge from the clutches of mythology" (Han, 2017, p. 57). Just as Adorno and Horkheimer (1944) argue the enlightenment aimed to free humanity from mythology though inherently wrapped in myth itself, the enlightenment of data is full of similar fantasies. These fantasies and delusions obscure the barbarity that dialectically adjoins advances in technological civility. He continues, "The imperative of the second Enlightenment declares: everything must become data and information. The soul of the second Enlightenment is data totalitarianism, or data fetishism. Although it announces that it is taking leave of all ideology, dataism is an ideology" (Han, 2017, p. 58). The tyranny of the no-man rule of data is in full force in modern, contemporary society. A society reduced to statistical treatment of reality, of statistical modes of thinking like calculating and computing is one informed by the ideology of dataism. A nihilistic ideology without meaning, additive and not narrative, an ideology of the totalitarian void (Han, 2017). Everything reduced to data, the technological no-man rule with no ideology has subordinated man to machine.

## EDUCATION, ORDER, AND THE SPECTER OF EMANCIPATION

Subordination to, with the supplemental conformist and behaviorist modes of being and thinking, leads to the automation of humanity. This is certainly tyranny, certainly barbarism.

But yet again the barbaric tyranny, the automation of humanity, is cloaked in a guise of affluence, freedom, innovation, and unprecedented connection. The once liberating digital technology seems to have yet again transcended society and rules over it. Han (2017) remarks that the unbound freedom and communication of new technologies has, over time, transformed into total control and surveillance. Echoing Zuboff (2019), the increasing flow of communications and information has accelerated so much into a new growth market for control, prediction, and profit. The enlightenment of digital tech and the information revolution seems a far cry from the original etymology - to make luminous and visible. Bridle (2018) notes, “The operation of surveillance, and our complicity in it, is one of the most fundamental characteristics of the new dark age, because it insists on a kind of blind vision: everything is illuminated, but nothing is seen” (p. 185). The nihilism inherent in the dataist ideology is undergirded by a blind vision where humanity is laid bare yet no understanding is gleaned, only power and domination. This is the essence of the barbarism and the tyranny of totalitarian technological rule.

The pervasiveness of surveillance, the one-dimensional thought of technology, and the ideology of data all have profound impacts on the structure and form of contemporary education. The social form, in Arendtian idiom, of contemporary life has melded the public and private realms into one. A loss for adults for sure, but an overwhelming burden for children who need to be educated and brought into this modern world. She argues that although children have been emancipated from the authority of adults, they are - for worse - subjected to the social whole of the majority, the statistical treatment of reality, and the masses. Children, without autonomous reason nor a true rebellious drive, are ‘thrown back’ to a combination of numbing conformism

## EDUCATION, ORDER, AND THE SPECTER OF EMANCIPATION

and juvenile delinquency (Arendt, 1961). Her prescient recognition is ever more true in the age of digital technology, social media, and surveillance. The idols of the scientific-mathematical understanding of reality, the statistical conformism of the masses, and the overwhelming technological approach to reality stifles the development and growth of children.

Not only in the private realm of the home but the public sphere of school, have all aspects of childhood been colonized by the domination of a totalitarian-driven technological society and culture. “The more completely modern society discards the distinction between what is private and what is public, between what can thrive only in concealment and what needs to be shown to all in the full light of the public world, the more, that is, it introduces between the private and the public a social sphere in which the private is made public and vice versa, the harder it makes things for its children, who by nature require the security of concealment in order to mature undisturbed” (Arendt, 1961, p. 185). The rise of the social sphere and the subsequent domination of that sphere by technology spells disaster for any hope of new beginnings or uniqueness in children. As everything has been illuminated (through surveillance) and all has turned to data, the serious threat posed by one-dimensional techno-power to individual privacy, autonomous thought and behavior, and the notion of the unique humanity is of paramount concern for the education of children.

### **Conclusion**

This thesis is concerned with the emancipatory possibilities for education while considering the material and ideological conditions of contemporary society. The first chapter details the historical nature of education and the impact of modern advancements on education’s relationship to the historical constants of alienation and ideology. These universal impediments to the emancipation of societies, classes, and individuals are tempered by historical conditions.

## EDUCATION, ORDER, AND THE SPECTER OF EMANCIPATION

As described above, the progressive advancement of reason and enlightenment has complemented a regressive retreat into myth, barbarism, and tyranny. As Adorno and Horkheimer (1944) state:

Where the development of the machine has become that of the machinery of control, so that technical and social tendencies, always intertwined, converge in the total encompassing of human beings, those who have lagged behind represent not only untruth. Adaptation to the power of progress furthers the progress of power, constantly renewing the degenerations which prove successful progress, not failed progress, to be its own antithesis. The curse of irresistible progress is irresistible regression. (p. 28)

The machine, or technological bureaucracy that controls institutions and society at large, may be progressing, but the regression of the masses needed to be educated is undeniable. The implication for emancipatory education, a critical humanist education for radical change, is one that must be deeply grasped in order to propose a new vision.

The alienation inherent in living in this world, from archaic times to the contemporary period, can be allayed or exacerbated by one's education. As education for the community, in the distribution of knowledge and the distribution of places of the *police* order, one perceives their part in the broader whole. The seeds of the totalitarian unity in *The Republic* laid the framework for the modern, contemporary society. In the technological society, the one-dimensional world of necessity and survival, the alienation from the self and the world seems ever more total. Marcuse (1964) argues:

I have just suggested that the concept of alienation seems to become questionable when the individuals identify themselves with their existence which is imposed

## EDUCATION, ORDER, AND THE SPECTER OF EMANCIPATION

upon them and have in it their own development and satisfaction. This identification is not illusion but reality. However, the reality constitutes a more progressive stage of alienation. The latter has become entirely objective; the subject which is alienated is swallowed up by its alienated existence. There is only one dimension, and it is everywhere and in all forms. (p. 11)

That complete identification with their imposed material existence, through the alluring mirage of digital technology, the idol of scientific propaganda, the reductive statistical approach to reality, and the rise of dataism in a total social world that has blurred the realms of private and public is the consequence of ideology. Education in that ideology is necessary to become part of the whole, one with the totality, at ease with one's position in order, content in the alienated existence.

The ideology of education in the contemporary totalitarian, technological order is one ripe with myth, obfuscation, and hysteria. As Althusser (1971) argued, education as an institution of society as a whole, interpellates individuals as subjects. With the rise of the social, in Arendt's (1958) view, the subject of education is one without privacy. Through the bureaucratic, technological state's development of tools of domination, control, and surveillance, the individual-subject is one tyrannized from the interior, lacking the reason to rebel, subdued into a delinquent conformism on the verge of automatism. Reduced to data, questions of education are confronted with the one-dimensional thought of calculation, computation, accountability and measurement. The sole focus on education or learning, is to prepare for a lifetime of uncertainty, precarity, and mere survival. The victory of the laboring society regards educations as a means to ensure necessity and nothing else. Survival and the wholesale submission in order to maintain one's position in the distribution of knowledge and power, is what characterizes the ideology of

## EDUCATION, ORDER, AND THE SPECTER OF EMANCIPATION

contemporary education. Arendt (1958) laments, “It is quite conceivable that the modern age - which began with such an unprecedented and promising outburst of human activity - may end in the deadliest, most sterile passivity history has ever known” (p. 322). In order to avert the impending crisis of modern humanity under totalitarian technological control, a radical revision of emancipatory education must be undertaken.

### **Chapter III - The Market and the Sacred, Consuming and Learning**

#### **Introduction**

The third chapter will explore the connections between ancient notions of the sacred and its modern analog. This exploration will ground the dominant logics and rationalities of contemporary education for a thorough revision in chapters four and five. Shifting focus from the totalitarianism of technology to the globalization and universalization of the market, this chapter situates the market in existential and historical terms. Through Emile Durkheim's (1912) *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* and Adorno and Horkheimer's (1944) *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, the repetition of mythology within enlightenment thinking will be argued. As religion is the root of all social organization, modern conceptions of community will be considered through Herbert Marcuse's (1955) *Eros and Civilization* as well as a return to Arendt's (1958) *The Human Condition*. Finally, contemporary accounts of the market, the commodity, and consuming will be explored through Zygmunt Bauman's (2009) *Consuming Life* and Han's (2018) *Topology of Violence*. Through the sacred commodity and market, the predominance of education as learning and learning as consuming will support the final chapter towards a revision of education. Part I will consider the ideology of the market and its influence on education through ancient notions of the sacred and mythology.

#### **Part I**

Education, schooling, and learning have all taken on explicit economic characteristics in contemporary society. Perhaps always considered a way for self-advancement, earning potential, and access to opportunities, education is increasingly a commodity while those partaking in education, a commodity themselves. Again, the reproduction of societies required education to be tailored to particular economic divisions in society (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1970; Bowles &

## EDUCATION, ORDER, AND THE SPECTER OF EMANCIPATION

Gintis, 1976; Giroux, 2001). As entrepreneurialism, consumerism, and privatization become dominant ideologies in modern education, the underlying role of capital and the capital market needs to be reckoned with. And in the mode of Adorno and Horkheimer (1944), the secularized market of rational exchange, freedom, and commodities must be thought of in light of myth, power, and domination. Emile Durkheim's (1912) study of totemism and the elementary forms of religious (and social) life will provide the ground in which the market can be understood in mystical terms. The market, and subsequent exchange and consumption of commodities, must be considered as a marker of the sacred.

All social and collective forms of life since the dawn of time have been rooted in notions of the sacred that foster solidarity and community. The sacred, as a function of religion, is any object as a representation of some transcendent power, distinguished from the profane. Religion is thus eminently social, Durkheim (1912) notes, "Religious representations are collective representations that express collective realities" (p. 11). It is the inherent religious character that marks the structure of any social collective. The social collective, or society is ordered and organized through representations of the sacred that have accumulated over time. He adds, this representation as sacred has, "A very special intellectuality, infinitely richer and more complex than that of the individual, is concentrated in them" (Durkheim, 1912, p. 18). This total, as represented in the object, which divines the sacred from the profane, is greater than the sum of its parts. "This sacred character comes only from its status as the material representation of the totem" (Durkheim, 1912, p. 99). Rather, this total, represented in the totem, is a force beyond this world. Durkheim (1912) states, "In other words, totemism is the religion not of certain animals, men, or images, but of a kind of anonymous and impersonal force that is found in each of these beings though identical to none. None possesses it entirely and all share in it" (p. 140).

## EDUCATION, ORDER, AND THE SPECTER OF EMANCIPATION

The sacred and the profane, as embodied in the totem, is a representation of an ever present force. A force that is an impersonal god, without history, immanent and diffuse (Durkheim, 1912). This force lives and thrives to this day. Even in the modern, secular age, the sacred and profane are forces recognized in the market with the totem of commodity.

The contemporary world is ruled through the *mana* or otherworldly force of the market and the commodity, as totem, invokes reverence, informs meaning, and produces solidarity. Neither completely enlightened nor secular, the modern society is mythologized through the market and commodity. Returning to Adorno and Horkheimer (1944):

Just as myths already entail enlightenment, with every step enlightenment entangles itself more deeply in mythology. Receiving all its subject matter from myths, in order to destroy them, it falls as judge under the spell of myth... The doctrine that action equals reaction continued to maintain the power of repetition over existence long after humankind had shed the illusion that, by repetition, it could identify itself with repeated existence and so escape its power... The principle of immanence, the explanation of every event as repetition, which enlightenment upholds against mythical imagination, is that of myth itself. The arid wisdom which acknowledges nothing new under the sun, because all the pieces in the meaningless game have been played out, all the great thoughts have been thought, all possible discoveries can be construed in advance, and human beings are defined by self-preservation through adaptation—this barren wisdom merely reproduces the fantastic doctrine it rejects: the sanction of fate which, through retribution, incessantly reinstates what always was. Whatever might be different is made the same. That is the verdict which critically sets the boundaries

## EDUCATION, ORDER, AND THE SPECTER OF EMANCIPATION

to possible experience. The identity of everything with everything is bought at the cost that nothing can at the same time be identical to itself. Enlightenment dissolves away the injustice of the old inequality of unmediated mastery, but at the same time perpetuates it in universal mediation, by relating every existing thing to every other. (p. 8)

Enlightenment, full of its own mythology, has repeated the repetition of myth with the immanence of identity. The exchange of identity or the buying and selling of commodity in modern society has transcended to the ultimate arbiter of life. Far from the dominance of rationality and reason, the modern world is fraught with myth and the sacred. The market *mana* is the untouchable epitome of irrationality in the guise of an unseen rationality or ‘hand of God’.

Adorno and Horkheimer (1944) state, “With the spread of the bourgeois commodity economy the dark horizon of myth is illuminated by the sun of calculating reason, beneath whose icy rays the seeds of the new barbarism are germinating. Under the compulsion of power, human labor has always led away from myth and, under power, has always fallen back under its spell” (p. 25). The barbarism of life subordinated to the power of the market is the horizon of meaning in the modern world. Laboring and consuming in the market condition the life of most, with the totemic commodity a representation of the modern myth of rationality. Just as totems separated the profane from the sacred, the commodity is teeming with otherworldly sanctity. Actions taken against commodities are gravely prohibited sins. The capitalist market as mythic force with its accompanying sacred object the commodity, is truly greater than the sum of its parts and representative of a mystical, omniscient and omnipresent rationality. The rise of the market, as organization of society and community, is a historical regressive-progression of civilization as a

## EDUCATION, ORDER, AND THE SPECTER OF EMANCIPATION

whole that Marcuse (1955) identifies in *Eros & Civilization*. Marcuse's thinking will further Durkheim and situate the idea of education as being part of a community in part II.

### **Part II**

If social organization is rooted in religious representations like Durkheim (1912) claims and the modern world is ripe with 'enlightened', 'rational' mythologies like Adorno and Horkheimer (1944) claim, then Marcuse (1955) positions the rise of the market and consumption as a pleasurable repression. Rather than a progressive increase of freedom and pleasure in human civilization throughout the millennia, the dialectical regression of human pleasure and freedom has culminated in the contemporary pursuit in the market. He notes that civilization is really just the progression of work, the procuring and augmenting of the world toward the necessities of life. An intensified and extended regime of control over labor leads man to dissatisfaction. (Marcuse, 1955). The alienated, miserable, painful labor that created the material basis of society, and still maintains it although in other parts of the world, was forged only through brute necessity and force (Marcuse, 1955).

With the rise of the contemporary world and the sacred market however, the repression, force, and alienation inherent in social organization has been skewed. Now, repression and force is channeled through the market, the demand to pursue pleasure and happiness is the only obedience necessary to maintain one's position in the social organization. He concludes, "The individual does not really know what is going on; the overpowering machine of education and entertainment unites him with all the others in a state of anesthesia from which all detrimental ideas tend to be excluded. And since knowledge of the whole truth is hardly conducive to happiness, such general anesthesia makes individuals happy" (Marcuse, 1955, p. 104). The anesthetic inherent in the commodity market, administered as a repressive tool that fosters

## EDUCATION, ORDER, AND THE SPECTER OF EMANCIPATION

alienation, is the pursuit of happiness through consuming all aspects of one's world. The sacred commodity and the force of the market are the horizon of meaning in the contemporary world.

In agreement with her 'Heidegger's children' brother, Arendt sees the rise of the market and the consumer society as a result of perpetual necessity. As mentioned in the last chapter, the victory of the laboring society has significant consequences on the possibilities of the human condition. Echoing Marcuse, she writes, "Necessity and life are so intimately related and connected that life itself is threatened where necessity is altogether eliminated. For the elimination of necessity, far from resulting automatically in the establishment of freedom, only blurs the distinguishing line between freedom and necessity" (Arendt, 1958, p. 71). While necessity, in terms of alienated, brute labor, has significantly diminished in the contemporary world, the fostering of freedom is far from established. As in Marcuse (1955), the blurring of freedom and necessity is the demand to pursue happiness in the market. Neither bound to necessity nor fully emancipated, the search for freedom and meaning in the market is one of arrested development.

This is due in part because, "Emancipation from labor, in Marx's own terms, is emancipation from necessity, and this would ultimately mean emancipation from consumption as well, that is, from the metabolism with nature which is the very condition of human life" (Arendt, 1958, p. 131). Labor, for the most part, now takes place in social interaction, service, and the manipulation of information. It also is a primary facet of the daily consumption in the market. The consumer's society turns laboring into consuming as the never-ending process of buying, selling, and exchange that stimulates necessity. Through the expansion of the market to all aspects of life, the ever-visible signs of wealth and abundance are countered by the increasing ranks of the poor and destitute. Arendt (1958) writes:

## EDUCATION, ORDER, AND THE SPECTER OF EMANCIPATION

In this as in other respects, the specter of a true consumers' society is more alarming as an ideal of present-day society than as an already existing reality. The ideal is not new; it was clearly indicated in the unquestioned assumption of classical political economy that the ultimate goal of the *vita activa* is growing wealth, abundance, and the "happiness of the greatest number." And what else, finally, is this ideal of modern society but the age-old dream of the poor and destitute, which can have a charm of its own so long as it is a dream, but turns into a fool's paradise as soon as it is realized. (p. 133)

This fool's paradise, an apt description for the world mythologized through the market and the commodity, reduces life to a never-ending quest to consume. And consuming leads to an anesthetic happiness, a stifled meaning that barely disguises the alienation of life and laboring as commodity.

The sacred, modern world of the commodity market and its accompanying social organization of repressive pleasure seeking, is realized in the misery and crisis of humanity in the contemporary age. There is a widespread awareness of the futility of life. A futility or shallowness derived from the ignorance of the continued necessity that drives society; even though that necessity is attained through the commoditization of life itself. Human life however, is dazzled by the wealth, abundance, and smooth functioning of the material world around it (Arendt, 1958). "The universal demand for happiness and the widespread unhappiness in our society (and these are but two sides of the same coin) are among the most persuasive signs that we have begun to live in a labor society which lacks enough laboring to keep it contented" (Arendt, 1958, p. 134). The pursuit of happiness and the pursuit of the self will be further explored in part III.

### Part III

The crisis generated by a world succumbed to the whims and futility of the market, production-consumption, and survival is one that has removed politics from the life of society. Politics is reduced to consumer choices, lifestyle decisions, and the degree of entrepreneurial self-exploitation. Dupuy (2014) states that our world is one in which politics has been humiliated by economics and political authority has been disgraced by mere managerialism. Concurring with the aforementioned mid-century thinkers, Dupuy (2014) decries the transcendent role the economy plays in the modern world as a normalizing mode of politics and religion. He writes, “The role Economy plays is exorbitant by any reasonable standard - and yet we find nothing in the least unusual about this. Not only has the influence of Economy spread throughout the world, it has taken over our very ways of thinking about the world” (Dupuy, 2014, p. xii). The market-mode of thinking with its obsession for exchange value and consuming has driven other ways of thought from the masses’ heads. Focusing societal well-being on the economy, or the maintenance of the household is the irrational God-like force that gives life meaning. He adds, “Little by little, Economy emancipated itself from the shackles of the sacred. Once held in check by religion, and then by politics, it has today become both our religion *and* our politics. No longer subject to any higher authority, it cannot decide our future *and* our world. Advanced postindustrial societies have been well and truly mystified...” (Dupuy, 2014, p. xiii). Bauman (2009) and Han (2017; 2018) contextualize the rise of the sacred market, or neoliberalism, in our contemporary age and the reduction of political community to vulgar, economic individualism. This context shades modern education and provides the ground to reinsert the political into education in chapter five.

## EDUCATION, ORDER, AND THE SPECTER OF EMANCIPATION

Affirming the Freudian and Marcusean view of human civilization and community, Bauman (2009) contends that repression accompanies any progress in freedom in order to secure the necessities of life. Any measure of togetherness or community is possible only through restraints and violence. With the modern age and the crisis of community of the *ancien regime* (i.e. natural order), communal order is achieved only through the internalization of restraints. Through the perpetual fabrication of community and the demand to be social, the obligation to participate in the market appeared as the freedom of choice (Bauman, 2009). He states:

What in fact happened, through, was the discovery, invention, or emergence of an alternative method... of manipulating the behavioral probabilities necessary to sustain the system of domination recognized as social order. Another variety of the 'civilizing process', an alternative and apparently more convenient way in which the task of that process could be pursued, was found and set in place.

This new way, practised by the liquid modern society of consumers, arouses little if any dissent, resistance or rebellion thanks to the expedient of representing the new *obligation as freedom* of choice. Once could say that the much pondered, criticized and reviled oracle of Jean-Jacques Rousseau - that 'people must be forced to be free' - came true... (Bauman, 2009, p. 74)

This force to be free, a repressive demand to choose is the new terms of obedience to the market which all must yield to. Like any domination, the force strikes fear in many and relegates even more to the category of waste. "Being a member of the society of consumers is a daunting task, a never-ending and uphill struggle. The fear of failing to conform has been elbowed out by a fear of inadequacy, but it has not become less haunting for that reason" (Bauman, 2009, p. 60).

## EDUCATION, ORDER, AND THE SPECTER OF EMANCIPATION

Submission to the market, the commodification of the self is the newest mode of learning to obey and obeying to be free (Bauman, 2009).

The internalization of power and domination for the greater good of the society subordinated to the logic of the market is evident in the entrepreneurial subject. The exploitation and self-violence of commodification is far from its appearance as the newest mode of freedom and flexibility. Han (2017) argues, “As an ‘entrepreneur of himself’, the neoliberal achievement-subject engages in auto-exploitation willingly - and even passionately. The self-as-a-work-of-art amounts to a beautiful but deceptive illusion that the neoliberal regime maintains in order to exhaust its resources entirely” (p. 28). The self-fabrication and exploitation to meet the market standards is perhaps the most violent form of domination as social order and community. And all under the pretense of ‘choice’, ‘freedom’, and ‘personalization’. He continues, “The neoliberal ideology of self-optimization displays religious - indeed, fanatical - traits. It entails a new form of subjectivation. Endlessly working at self-improvement resembles the self-examination and self-monitoring of Protestantism, which represents a technology of subjectivation and domination in its own right” (Han, 2017, p. 30). The mythical proportions of the market and the commodity as sacred object truly outlines the meaning of life in the contemporary world. The entrepreneurial spirit and the commodified self are representations of the proper individual in society, wholly committed to transcendence paradoxically grounded in mere survival and necessity.

The world subservient to the economy and the market is a world mired in myth, in ideology, and the irrational societal force represented in the sacred commodity. Just as in premodern societies, the sacred acts as a form for community, meaning, and an interpretation of death. The invasion, conquest, and colonization of modern human society by the patterns and

## EDUCATION, ORDER, AND THE SPECTER OF EMANCIPATION

measures of the commodity market come with its own relationship to finitude and death. Han (2018) writes:

At a deep psychological level, the archaic belief persists that the accumulation of the ability to kill will ward off death. More deadly violence is interpreted as less death. The economy of capital also displays a notable similarity to the archaic economy of violence. Instead of blood, it makes money flow forth. There is an essential proximity between blood and money. Capital behaves like modern mana. The more of it you have, the more powerful, invulnerable, and even immortal you consider yourself to be... Money or capital is thus an instrument against death. (p. 17)

The relationship between life and death is what gives life meaning. Subsequently, the procurement of life enabling, or necessity satisfying, capital through the commodity market is the ultimate expression of living. The roots of religion in the fear of death and the unknown have been transfigured into the modern hysteria for economic accumulation and growth (Han, 2018).

The consumer's society, with its obligation to pursue happiness in the market, is a social order that raises the commodity to paramount meaning. Bauman (2009) states, "In a society of consumers, *everyone* needs to be, ought to be, must be a consumer-by-vocation (that is, view and treat consumption as a vocation); in that society, consumption-seen-and-treated-as-vocation is one universal human right *and* human duty that knows of no exception" (p. 55). The demand to be a consumer and the vocation of consuming leads one to commodify one's own life. Life as commodity, and a desired one at that, is the life graced by God and the sacred. He continues:

Beneath the dream of fame, another dream, a dream of no longer dissolving and staying dissolved in the grey, faceless and insipid mass of commodities, a dream

## EDUCATION, ORDER, AND THE SPECTER OF EMANCIPATION

of turning into a notable, noticed and coveted commodity, a talked-about commodity, a commodity standing out from the mass of commodities, a commodity impossible to overlook, to deride, to be dismissed. In a society of consumers, turning into a desirable and desired commodity is the stuff of which dreams, and fairy tales, are made.” (Bauman, 2009, p. 13)

Turning oneself into a desirable commodity, a project of perpetual self-fabrication is pursuing freedom as the ultimate expression of domination. This domination is apparent when considering again, mentioned previously, the rise of laboring and consuming as the victory of necessity and survival above all else. This sacred, or rather profane expression of life is reduced to market exchange and the standards and ever-changing values of commodity.

Rather than producing happiness, freedom, and meaning, the society of the consumer, commodity, and market fetishizes the appearance of these ideals while stoking the roots of unhappiness. Like Marcuse (1955) and Arendt (1958) before him, Han (2018) points to the hysteria around the economy, the maintenance of the household, as the foundation of the crisis of human society. He argues, “The capitalist economy absolutizes *survival*. It is not concerned with the *good life*. It feeds on the illusion that more capital generates more life, and more ability to live... Concern for the good life yields to hysteria for survival. The reduction of life to vital biological processes strips life itself bare. Mere survival is obscene” (Han, 2018, p. 18). The obscenity of bare life, masquerading as consumer choice, and freedom is at the heart of the fetishism that characterizes the economy and market.

Just as Marx recognized commodity fetishism, Bauman (2009) elucidates a *subjectivity fetishism* in the contemporary consumer society. By hiding the inherent human interaction involved in the movement of commodities, economists fetishized the apparent neutrality

## EDUCATION, ORDER, AND THE SPECTER OF EMANCIPATION

disguising the exploitation and domination in production. The same occurs in the life as commodity or *subjectivity fetish*. The sought-after and desired life, the commodified existence aspired to by the masses conceals the internalized violence intrinsic to the self-as-entrepreneur. Beneath the surface of hysteria whipped up in reverence to the sacred commodity market lies a nihilistic, futility that education must counter. Han (2018) concludes, “Hyperactivity and acceleration of the process of life are an attempt to counteract the emptiness in which death announces itself. A society dominated by the hysteria for survival is a society of the undead, capable of neither living nor of dying” (p. 19). The stripping of life to its necessities is a shallow, obscene appearance of a potentially full life. The education, or rather learning that interpellates individuals into this undead society of fetishized, commodified selves prostrate to the market is the concern of the part IV.

### **Part IV**

In the context of a market-ordered society and a meaningful life derived from the sacred commodity, contemporary education is primarily a project of learning as consuming. To be educated, or rather to learn is to consume and subsequently to commodify oneself in the process. The focus of education today is a concentration on educational quality as a commodity in the market. It is focused on the delivering of specific consumable skills to make one a valuable asset in the economy. It is intent on masking the structural inequality through privatized schemes of school reform, charter, voucher, or online. Education broadly reflects the market demands of the society and as an institution reinforces those particular hegemonic ideologies.

Just as education reflects an overwhelming concern for technical questions of process, as discussed in the previous chapter, its obsession with instrumentalist quality is tied directly to the market. Education is thus reformed as a learning opportunity, recognizing a real gap in oneself

## EDUCATION, ORDER, AND THE SPECTER OF EMANCIPATION

that needs to be satisfied in order to improve one's standing in the market. Biesta (2006) states that this new learning paradigm signals a shift in education toward an economic transaction. He writes, "Teaching has become redefined as supporting or facilitating learning, just as education is now often described as providing learning opportunities or learning experiences" (Biesta, 2006, p. 14). Questions of what is of value or 'good' to be educated on are disregarded with instrumental concerns for delivering a service, of quality to a consumer.

In the vein of education as a consumable good or a service, is a corollary of education as a project of self-commodification. Schooling is the process that integrates the disparate parts of society into the community. What was once the national community is now a global community. And that global community is held together by the market, the commodity, and the internalization of domination through the obligation to pursue happiness. Education is the ultimate project of self-fabrication and of the entrepreneur of the self. The promise of modern education is socio-economic mobility which in turn means an education that is valuable on the market. The commodification of education entails an attitude of lifelong learning. Learning to meet a determined market-oriented end, a flaw or gap in knowledge or skill that is the 'hot new thing'. And since lifelong learning is learning for the market, learning is structured as a lifelong pursuit of unhappiness or dissatisfaction with one's place. As Arendt (1958) claimed, the futility of a life dedicated to securing the necessities as happiness will ultimately only sow greater unhappiness.

Consequently, the overwhelming concern for education as a consumer good reduces schooling to quality of process which in turn deprofessionalizes the whole project. Deprofessionalization of the work of teachers as well as parent and communal responsibility for the youth is dismissed through a stifling accountability regime. Biesta (2009) argues that

## EDUCATION, ORDER, AND THE SPECTER OF EMANCIPATION

accountability is a redefinition of the educational relationship in apolitical and antidemocratic terms that amounts to a crude economic transaction. Just as learning implies an economic transaction between the learner (consumer) and the school or teacher (provider), it also reflects the market logic in a much larger way as (Blacker, 2013) maintains.

Like Biesta (2006; 2009), Blacker (2013) argues that the emphasis on education as a transaction and a reflection of the market's instrumental value is detrimental. Of even greater concern however, is the project of modern, universal, compulsory education. Due to the fundamental contradictions and tensions of capitalism, particularly the contemporary form of neoliberalism or market fundamentalism, education's role as an institution that reproduces the system is being transformed. Blacker (2013) recognizes the added value that compulsory education provides in support for the capitalist market. By adding utility to commodities and directing the implicit learning towards market values and universal matriculation, compulsory education has been a boon. He adds, "Premised on compulsory education laws, universal schooling has on the whole been immensely profitable. Again, this is not the *only* reason to value universal schooling, and neither is it the only reason it has been championed historically. Profitability is the necessary condition and driving force, though; durability is secured only by those institutions that serve the needs of capital" (Blacker, 2013, p. 199). As an institution of capitalist society, schooling reflects the market. As the market requires less 'educated' consumers or commodities, the masses - whose only value is to commodify themselves - are offered fewer and fewer opportunities in an ever-growing privatized society.

A society however, is a contentious claim. After half a century of neoliberal policies and the increased role of the market in the world, the Thatcherian claim of 'there is no society' is becoming truer than ever. Blacker (2013) maintains that if there is no society, and no entitlement

## EDUCATION, ORDER, AND THE SPECTER OF EMANCIPATION

as a result of privatization, then the claim to a social entitlement like education is undercut. Therefore, the mass phenomenon of universal, compulsory education will be phased out in accordance with the demands of the market. He concludes, bleakly:

What is overwhelmingly likely - and is in fact already occurring - is that we will have sites populated by youth that are “compulsory” and sites populated by youth where “education” occurs. But we will no longer be seeing as many sites where youth are subject to “compulsory education”. Certainly compulsion will remain for the vast majority as they are warehoused and surveilled in a vestigial educational apparatus that becomes increasingly punitive and carceral in orientation, sites devoted most obviously to social control of “disposable” youth than anything recognizable as “education”. They will probably even still be called “schools.” (Blacker, 2013, p. 200)

A society, or non-society captured by the God-like force of the market and the sacred commodity will sacrifice many and all to achieve transcendence for the few. As education reproduces the market and replaces education with learning and learning for consuming, educational aims outside of instrumental and exchange value will continue to be marginalized. Replacing the education of control, domination, and commodification is necessary. In order to combat this impending crisis of humanity, a radical revision of education must be reckoned within the next chapter.

### **Conclusion**

Once again, this thesis is in regard to the ideological and material conditions of contemporary schooling and learning and the possibilities for emancipatory education. The second chapter’s intent is to trace the mythological, irrational yet foundational roots of modern

## EDUCATION, ORDER, AND THE SPECTER OF EMANCIPATION

society and the rise of the market. The market gives meaning to life and education specifically. It is fundamentally connected to alienation and ideology. The predominance of the market in all aspects of life and the project of learning is critical to recognize.

If alienation is the experiencing of the self through the perversion of values and world-alienation is the sole focus on survival against the world, then the rise of the market as social order and meaning is wholly alienating. By naturalizing the order of the world, the market as God-like force necessitates all to wallow in alienation. Lordon (2014) writes:

In contrast, capitalism's market forces, despite grinding people down no less violently, appear as a 'systemic effect', thus unassignable, without a centre and without deliberate design behind them; they seem almost like a necessity, which for Marx was the essence of commodity fetishism, and thereby conducive to all the rhetorical strategies that depoliticise things by naturalising them. (p. 96)

By fetishizing the commodity or the subjectivity, the real violence, exploitation, and domination inherent in the market process is obscured and exacerbated by the human condition of alienation. The proper course however, is to not even recognize this condition. The more commodified and prostrate to the market one is, the more perfectly sacred and righteous one is. He continues, "Of course, the ideal of the totalitarian practice of the neoliberal makeover of souls is that it should be merely transitional, reaching as fast as possible its (oxymoronic) horizon of free wills permanently conforming ('consenting'), so that once the norm has been perfected and engrammed the normalizing scaffolding can be withdrawn" (Lordon, 2014, p. 123).

The lack of scaffolding and the permanent consent is the product of ideology. The market ideology spread through explicit schooling and society broadly is thoroughly commodification. Just as education is commodified, and the educated commodified, the ideology of the learning

## EDUCATION, ORDER, AND THE SPECTER OF EMANCIPATION

transaction is the only meaning in contemporary education. The ideology of the market seems so absolute, its sacred power seems unassailable. The organization of society around this ideology leaves little room for manoeuver. Bauman (2009) writes, “The ‘society of consumers’ is a kind of society which (to recall the once popular term coined by Louis Althusser) ‘interpellates’ its members (that is, addresses them, hails, calls out to, appeals to, questions, but also interrupts and ‘breaks in upon’ them) *primarily in their capacity of consumers* (p. 52). The interpellation of society through education is the task of the final chapters. Education needs to creating meaning, interpellate, and emancipate against the market logic. Going against the sacred isn’t easy, but it is required. The fate of humanity rests in the alternative possibilities.

## **Chapter IV - An Educational Time and Space, Plurality, and Natality**

### **Introduction**

This fourth chapter will set the stage for the impossibility of education. This notion of impossibility will be explored further, but essentially, a radical revision of education and emancipation must be proposed. First, the school as a specific, democratic, educational space will be established with educationalists Gert Biesta (2006; 2010), Tyson E. Lewis (2011), Jan Masschelein and Maarten Simons (2010; 2015). Next, in Part II Arendt's (1961) "Crisis of Education" will propose the importance of authority, responsibility, and natality to the practice of emancipatory education. To counter the commoditization of life and learning as sacred, education that profanes is necessary. To negate the technological and totalizing rationalities of a world that is driven by the cycles of necessity, an education that suspends actualization and potentiality. And to resist the police order and its distribution of explanations, an emancipatory education grounded in plurality and uniqueness.

### **Part I**

As learning becomes the hegemonic and guiding vision for education in the twenty-first century, the technological order of the market restrains the potential of the school. The reduction of public education to repressive modes of learning include standardization and accountability. These forms of repression are driven by the one-dimensional thought and totalitarian logic of instrumental reason discussed in chapter two. The logic of learning informed by dataism is nihilistic and reduces education to learning as consuming and learning as survival; an economic transaction and a perpetual knowledge gap to remain in the community of the market. Standardization and accountability measures also address the market driven imperative to

## EDUCATION, ORDER, AND THE SPECTER OF EMANCIPATION

entrepreneurship and reforming oneself into a commodity. As education is subjected to more forces of the market and privatization, the public school's hope and promise is threatened.

Despite the role of schooling as an institution of interpellation, technique, and market conformism, the historical importance of the school is crucial now more than ever. As it reproduces social inequality, distribution of knowledges and forms commodities for the market, it also holds the radical key to democracy. As Blacker (2013) and Saltman (2017) argue, the public school is a historical invention that is in crisis due to market and technological changes. These changes have directed all learning to a technique driven process towards market aims. This amounts to a crisis of the democratic promise of the school. As the crisis threatens the school, a radical notion of education-reinvented is needed. Masschelein and Simons (2015) point out that the ancient Greek school was a democratic space against the privilege and order of society. Through suspending the natural, unequal order, the school provided free time for those unworthy through social position. They write, "The invention of the school constituted an emancipatory rupture and provided the 'format' for time-made-free, that is, the particular composition of time, space and matter that makes up the scholastic" (Masschelein and Simons, 2015, p. 86). The democratic space and time is a counter to the market logic and technological reason that determines the totality of contemporary society.

This democratization of free time is distinct from learning time, suspended and separated from the order of the world. Against the technique of schooling, standardization and accountability, as well as privatization and commodification, the free time of the school offers a respite. "In this sense, school time is freed from a defined end and therefore from the usual economy of time. It is 'undestined' time where the act of appropriating or intending for a (immediate) purpose or end is delayed or suspended" (Masschelein and Simons, 2015, p. 87).

## EDUCATION, ORDER, AND THE SPECTER OF EMANCIPATION

This use of time is elevated above the required subjugation to necessity and labor. The suspension of time is an act of freedom against the sacred market and logic of necessity. They continue, “Suspension could be regarded more generally as an event of de-privatization; it sets something free. The term ‘free’, however, not only has the negative meaning of suspension (free from), but also a positive meaning, that is, free to. Drawing upon the terminology of Agamben, we use the term *profanation* to describe this kind of freedom” (Masschelein and Simons, 2015, p. 87). Agamben’s profane is one of purity from the sacred through inversion and disconnection with the regular order and condition. The profane freedom derived from the separation from the natural order and time of the market holds radical potential for reinvention.

“The complaints about the school that it is good for nothing, which can be commonly heard now, thus point at what the school actually is about: the separation from productive life and constitutes for each and all time and space...” (Masschelein and Simons, 2010, p. 674). The nothingness of school is desperately needed in an accelerating time of the totalitarian, technologically driven, market society. Separation from the broader world is the promise of the democratic, free time of the school. Instead of lifelong learning, a time for study is the mode of education necessary today in the public school. Masschelein and Simons (2010) argue that the profane school suspends time and space in a democratic form; a public and common place where the reasoning and logic of the ordered society is suspended. The suspension of learning towards a time for studying is the (im)potential of the democratic school.

Masschelein and Simons (2015) conclude, “In a way school can be seen as the material, visible form of this ‘not yet or gap’. It is in front of common things available as means that the young generation is offered the opportunity to experience itself as a *new* generation, i.e. the experience of (im)potentiality/beginning in from of something that is open for common use” (p.

## EDUCATION, ORDER, AND THE SPECTER OF EMANCIPATION

88). The common use of free time and space for studying is a counter to the learning gap inherent in the commoditization of life, the consuming of education for survival, and the natural order. Studying, Lewis (2011) states, is not reducible to the distribution of knowledge or learning for economic survival, rather it allows the student to remain (im)potential. The counter to the totalitarian logic of actualization in education inherent in the time of the market, is to negate actuality with potentiality. “Time of study is not simply a “not yet” nor is it “no longer”. Rather the time of study is the messianic time of the now which is *both* “no longer” *and* “not yet” simultaneously. It is thus a paradoxical time that, by embodying both logics simultaneously, suspends them, renders them inoperative” (Lewis, 2011, p. 592). The messianic time is a surplus of the present, through the democratization of free time, and a revelation of the immanence between the present world order and the future. The potentiality in study, through the free time offered in the public school, is a potential of emancipation.

The institution of schooling as a space and time dedicated to the hegemony of the technological market society necessitates the actualization of potential through the logic of learning. Drawing on Agamben, Lewis (2011) suggests studying as (im)potentiality contra the obligation to actualization is a form of freedom and emancipation. He argues that through learning, the student goes through an alteration or a becoming other that exhausts potential. The fitting into the order of society necessitates a destruction of certain potentiality when actualized. “Those who have knowledge are *in potential*, meaning that they equally have the capacity to bring knowledge into actuality and *not* bring knowledge into actuality... By conserving itself, potential remains (im)potential” (Lewis, 2011, p. 588). (Im)potential refers not to impotence but rather to the capacity to not actualize. The democratic free time of the public school needs to

## EDUCATION, ORDER, AND THE SPECTER OF EMANCIPATION

revision the possibility of (im)potential and the suspension of the technological order or market-driven necessity.

The problem with neoliberalism is that “today’s man believes himself capable of everything, and so he repeats his jovial ‘no problem’, and his irresponsible ‘I can do it’, precisely when he should instead realize that he has been consigned in unheard of measures to forces and processes over which he has lost all control... It is this Promethean hubris that bothers Agamben - a hubris that is also found in the capitalist logic of infinite expansion and profit generation. This is the very same hubris of neoliberal education, argues that children should maximize their activity and in turn “pull themselves up by their own bootstraps” through a self-initiated entrepreneurialism. (Lewis, 2011, p. 589)

The obligation to self-realize and self-actualize oneself through education is the consequence of the laboring market society’s demand for commoditization. Lewis (2011) engaging with Agamben, recognizes this as an education that denies real freedom, and only suspension of one’s potential can provide the opportunity for emancipation. The subjugation of the actuality of learning to the market is an impediment to education as a free time of study. The suspension of time and order opens up the possibilities of democracy through the darkness of studying the uncontrollable “unheard of measures of force and process” of the totalitarian, technological society of the market. This darkness, outside the visible order and panoptical society, is the color of potentiality against the lightness of actuality (Lewis, 2011).

The abyss of potential, the natural order suspended in darkness, and the root of freedom are formed in the democratic space and time of the school. Lewis (2011) states, “To think pure potential freed from its subservience to actualization is to wander through darkness and shadow.

## EDUCATION, ORDER, AND THE SPECTER OF EMANCIPATION

To study is not to follow the light out of the maze but rather to remain in the shadows of the maze. What it means to study the present is not its light, by which Agamben means that which transfixes us through desire (the commodity) or need (the risk of the labor market) but rather to study obscurity” (p. 594). This studying is the lodestar of radically new possibilities of education and life generally. The darkness of potentiality is akin to the darkness of Arendt’s (1961; 1968) private realm that enables the child to grow and develop fully. The democratic school of free time should be an extension of this private realm not fully public. The school is a site of initiation into the public.

To be explored further in the next section, Arendt’s notion of education as preparation for the public realm and politics is achieved through a particular conservation and authority. The school, as a form of democratized space and time, free and equal, within a natural, unequal order. It is a place where Masschelein and Simons (2010) note, meaning, knowledge, and values are passed on with authority to the next generation. “It maintains something of this archaic function: to conserve and pass on what the older generation knows about how to live together, about nature, and about the world... that brings knowledge into play in a radical way” (p. 677). This conservation and authority, a certain conservatism that is essential to education that upholds the potentiality of democratic free time to study, is the historical lesson of the invention of the school. Because of the crisis of education, the accelerated time of the market and survival, and the possible obsolescence of compulsory universal schooling, a radical reinvention of the school is necessary.

### **Part II**

The focus on the democratic school as a suspension and separation from the order and time of broader society that Masschelein and Simons (2010; 2015) and Lewis (2011) identify are

## EDUCATION, ORDER, AND THE SPECTER OF EMANCIPATION

largely in line with Arendt's (1958; 1961) concerns on the crisis of education. She too, as discussed previously, recognizes the instrumentalization of the world beholden to technology and the machine as well as the tyranny of the majority and market. To counter this in the realm of education, Arendt's call for authority, responsibility, and conservatism is needed. To enable plurality and natality, the essences of education and democracy, the conservative action of education is in fact, radical.

The public education characterized as learning as consuming or learning as survival is really schooling that accentuates our alienation by serving the 'machine'. The 'machine' as a conglomeration of worldly objects, is the product of Arendt's (1958) *homo faber*. The fabricated world is the concrete structure in which the life process, survival, and the consumption of necessity takes place. The fabrication or man-made technology and accompanying bureaucracy determines education that is primarily instrumental. Arendt (1958) writes, "The frequent complaints we hear about the ends and means in modern society, about men becoming the servants of the machines they themselves invented and of being "adapted" to their requirements instead of using them as instruments for human needs and wants, have their roots in the factual situation of laboring" (p. 145). The contemporary regime of neoliberal education and its demand for actualization, measurement, and commoditization is a mere form of this underlying modern structure of society. The domination of society by a technological-economic 'machine', reduces education to an instrumental process of conformism and behaviorism. The learning process is likened to the laboring process, "What dominates the labor process and all work processes which are performed in the mode of laboring is neither man's purposeful effort nor the product he may desire, but the motion of the process itself and the rhythm it imposes upon the laborers" (Arendt,

## EDUCATION, ORDER, AND THE SPECTER OF EMANCIPATION

1958, p. 146). Pursuing instrumental aims as commoditization and survival, education is reduced to a learning process that feeds the greater life process of the laboring society.

The domination of the laboring society to instrumental process and technological advancements necessitates a politics largely anti-democratic. Whether a system of inverted totalitarianism (Wolin, 2008) or post-democracy (Ranciere, 1999), the totalitarian nature of opposition to democratic politics is the condition of public life in the laboring society. The tyranny inherent in totalitarianism is at the root of directing all educational potential to actualization in the marketplace. Tyranny, Arendt (1958) notes, is the combination of force and powerlessness that shapes a public sphere toward futility and impotence. She writes, “Montesquieu realized that the outstanding characteristic of tyranny was that it rested on isolation - on the isolation of the tyrant from his subjects and the isolation of the subjects from each other through mutual fear and suspicion...” (Arendt, 1958, p. 202). The resulting situation is a prevention of public power and a reduction of the public realm to a management of the economy. It is the instrumentalization of the public and specifically action that Arendt (1958) sees as so detrimental to education and the human condition more broadly.

She writes:

The calamities of action all arise from the human condition of plurality, which is the condition *sine qua non* for that space or appearance which is the public realm. Hence the attempt to do away with this plurality is always tantamount to the abolition of the public realm itself. The most obvious salvation from the dangers of plurality is mon-archy, or one-man-rule, in its many varieties, from outright tyranny of one against all to benevolent despotism and to those forms of democracy in which the many form a collective body so that the people “is many

## EDUCATION, ORDER, AND THE SPECTER OF EMANCIPATION

in one” and constitute themselves as a “monarch”. . . The trouble with these forms of government is not that they are cruel, which often they are not, but rather that they work too well. Tyrants, if they know their business, may well be “kindly and mild in everything”. . . (Arendt, 1958, pp. 220-221)

For Arendt, tyranny stifles the public sphere and therefore manipulates action towards the maintenance of the economy or technological development. Action, in plurality, is the ultimate aim of education. This education and development require a responsible and conserving approach that fosters the uniqueness and natality necessary for acting in plurality. Otherwise, the channeling of action and the instrumentalization of the public reduces, “... the human capacity for action, for beginning new and spontaneous processes which without men would never come into existence...” (Arendt, 1958, p. 231). The tyranny of the majority, of the market, and the instrumentalization of action threatens the plurality necessary for democracy, new beginnings, and other modes of human togetherness (Biesta, 2010). Contemporary society and the institution of schooling interpellates students as subjects of the tyrannical market, freedom in consumption, and a competitive-technological community.

As antidote to the dominant logic of learning and education, Arendt’s (1958; 1961) notions of natality and plurality, as the beginning of uniqueness and action, is called for. Plurality, is the negation of the totalitarianism of technological development and of the market as the great equalizer of commodified life. She states, “Human plurality, the basic condition of both action and speech has the twofold character of equality and distinction. If men were not equal, they could neither understand each other and those who came before them not plan for the future and foresee the needs of those who will come after them” (Arendt, 1958, p. 175). Tyranny threatens this equality and condition of plurality. Arendt (1958) continues, “If men were not

## EDUCATION, ORDER, AND THE SPECTER OF EMANCIPATION

distinct, each human being distinguished from any other who is, was, or will ever be, they would need neither speech nor action to make themselves understood” (p. 176). This distinctness and otherness involved in plurality is a paradoxical community of unique beings only possible in the public realm. Distinct from the necessity of laboring and the instrumentalization of action in work, the plurality of the public is the space where freedom can appear. Education must be directed towards cultivating the uniqueness of humanity for action.

The crisis in education is recognized in the fact that our prejudice and assumptions around instrumentalized learning go against the essence of education. This essence, Arendt (1961) argues, is natality and the process of being *born* into the world. Natality is the natural origin of life and so of education, “It is in the very nature of the human condition that each new generation grows into an old world, so that to prepare a new generation for a new world can only mean that one wishes to strike from the newcomers’ hands their own chance at the new” (Arendt, 1961, p. 174). By instrumentalizing learning towards preordained ends, and turning education into a means or process of achieving those ends, the dominant logic of schooling works against natality. Instead, Arendt (1961) claims, “For education belongs among the most elementary and necessary activities of human society, which never remains as it is but continuously renews itself through birth, through the arrival of new human beings. These newcomers, moreover, are not finished but in a state of becoming” (p. 182). The double nature of natality, as essence of education, prepares new humans through beginning life as well as beginning to live fully free human lives. Developing one’s uniqueness and particularity in a strange world is an act of becoming that holds the potential for freedom in the public sphere. As Biesta (2006) argues, it is the boundlessness and unpredictability of action that must be encouraged rather than action reduced to a technique or process.

## EDUCATION, ORDER, AND THE SPECTER OF EMANCIPATION

As mentioned previously, the reduction to technique and process towards commoditization or survival negates the possibility of education as a space of plurality and freedom. Only with others who are distinct and equal can humans fully realize their potential action. Acting in plurality is a beginning that will have consequences and responses from others. This is the boundlessness or unpredictability that education needs to cultivate. “It is in the nature of beginning that something new is started which cannot be expected from whatever may have happened before. This character of startling unexpectedness is inherent in all beginnings and in all origins” (Arendt, 1958, p. 178). This gets to the root of the impossibility of education. Education needs to shed its instrumental means and ends, commoditization for the market, and tyranny of the majority to realize the true freedom inherent in the human condition. She adds, “The fact that man is capable of action means that the unexpected can be expected from him, that he is able to perform what is infinitely improbable... If action as beginning corresponds to the fact of birth, if it is the actualization of the human condition of natality, then speech corresponds to the fact of distinctness and is the actualization of the human condition of plurality, that is, of living as a distinct and unique being among equals” (Arendt, 1958, p. 178). Plurality and natality give birth to a freedom for other pursuits, for action. The goal of education should be to prepare humans for this “being-together-in-plurality” of the public realm and politics where freedom can arise (Biesta, 2010).

The public realm or public space doesn't necessarily mean a physical space, but rather, like discussed above, a space outside of the order and logic of the market society (Masschelein and Simons, 2010; 2015). Like the democratic, free time, the public space is a mode of human community radically opposed to the tyranny and totalitarianism of contemporary society. Biesta (2010) notes, “Arendt is committed to a world in which everyone has the opportunity to act,

## EDUCATION, ORDER, AND THE SPECTER OF EMANCIPATION

appear, and be free. An important implication of this is that the public domain, the domain in which freedom can appear, should not be understood in physical terms but denotes a particular quality of human interaction” (p. 561). This quality or space where freedom can appear is a space of potential appearances and the opportunity for new beginnings (Arendt, 1958, p. 199). The potential freedom is not a freedom of the will but a freedom to “call something into being which did not exist before” (Biesta, 2010). The plurality and possibility of dealing with the unpredictableness of previously not existent action or speech leads to consequences as well for the public sphere. As tyranny portends isolation, freedom and action requires plurality. The technique and instrumentalization of education reduce the possibility to act as well as the consequences of acting. Education must not control the possibilities of acting by others, others may respond and begin other initiatives in reaction. Anything but, is a tyrannical education aimed at integrating newcomers solely into the existing social order while suffocating acts of beginning. Biesta (2010) adds, “Arendt thus helps us to see that subjectification - which is an ongoing, never-ending process - is a process of gain and loss, and if we are not willing to run the risk of losing some of what we bring into the world, we will never be able to gain our freedom and subjectivity” (p. 85). The idea of subjectification will be explored more in the final chapter.

It is important to realize though, education as beginning-in-plurality does not relieve itself of of traditional, archaic functions of schooling. Rather than the openness of action and the boundlessness of natality, an Arendtian approach to education demands responsibility and conservative authority. Recognizing the condition of education that is instrumentalized and commodified, Arendt (1958) counters the stoic resistance with active, authoritative, responsibility. She says:

## EDUCATION, ORDER, AND THE SPECTER OF EMANCIPATION

It is in accordance with the great Western thought to think along these lines: to accuse freedom of luring man into necessity, to condemn action, the spontaneous beginning of something new, because its results fall into a predetermined net of relationships, invariably dragging the agent with them, who seems to forfeit his freedom the very moment he makes use of it. The only salvation from this kind of freedom seems to lie in non-acting, in abstention from the whole realm of human affairs as the only means to safeguard... (Arendt, 1958, p. 234)

This stoic approach to education, is different than the (im)potentiality and suspension discussed previously, the space and time necessary for education is a specific intervention to promote the entering into human affairs and the plurality where freedom actually appears. Stoicism, is an exchange of a real world of plurality with an imaginary one where others are same (Arendt, 1958). She claims, "Stoicism rests on the illusion of freedom when one is enslaved" (Arendt, 1958, p. 235).

Rather than challenge the educational instrumentalization and reduction to survival in our contemporary order through the illusory stoicism, the responsibility of education is one that prepares for plurality. Biesta (2010) notes that education without responsibility for natality is submission to instrumental, tyrannical learning and would actually mark an end of education.

Arendt (1961) argues:

Education is the point at which we decide whether we love the world enough to assume responsibility for it and by the same token save it from that ruin which, except for renewal, except for the coming of the new and young, would be inevitable. And education, too, is where we decide whether we love our children enough not to expel them from our world and leave them to undertaking

## EDUCATION, ORDER, AND THE SPECTER OF EMANCIPATION

something new, something unforeseen by us, but to prepare them in advance for the task of renewing a common world. (Arendt, 1961, p. 193)

Counter to the learning process and the training for the commodity market, responsibility for the renewal of the old world is the essence of education. If responsibility confers authority, then the authority-less tyranny of the majority and the commodity market society leads humanity to refuse responsibility and project it onto the technological order. “If we remove authority from political and public life, it may mean that from now on an equal responsibility for the course of the world is to be required of everyone. But it may also mean that the claims of the world and the requirements of order in it are being consciously or unconsciously repudiated...” (Arendt, 1961, p. 186). The authority and responsibility for education is to provide the foundation for freedom-in-plurality of the public realm. Otherwise a continued repudiation for the responsibility of the world will be continued in the social realm, a space where action is taken in the world and the world renewed through initiating beginnings.

Fundamentally, the responsibility and authority of Arendtian education is paradoxically conservative for radical aims. Conservatism, she claims, is the essence of education, to protect and conserve the natality from the order and market dominated space and time of contemporary society. She writes, “the child against the world, the world against the child, the new against the old, the old against the new” (Arendt, 1958, p. 188). But this conservatism again, is only a function of education, and impossible, boundless action of plurality should characterize the public realm. The world “is irrevocably delivered up to the ruin of time unless human beings are determined to intervene, to alter, to create what is new” (Arendt, 1958, p. 189). The crisis of education is bound to the instrumentalization of humanity’s innate beginnings and actions toward the reinforcing of order. Paradoxically, natality and conservatism are at the root of education for

## EDUCATION, ORDER, AND THE SPECTER OF EMANCIPATION

a human life and freedom. Arendt (1961) states, “Exactly for the sake of what is new and revolutionary in every child, education must be conservative; it must preserve this newness and introduce it as a new thing into an old world, which, however revolutionary its actions may be, is always, from the standpoint of the next generation, superannuated and close to destruction” (p. 189).

### **Conclusion**

To radically revise and reinvent education in the contemporary era is to propose a democratic time and space, a time and space that cultivates the uniqueness from plurality and (im)potential in the suspension from order. Suspension from the alienation of society and order to promote an education that truly develops the student into a subject capable of their own action rather than situating one into society. Countering the technique of instrumentalization and the learning for consumption and survival, education for emancipation prepares humanity for new beginnings and the place where freedom can appear. Against the tyranny of the majority and totalitarianism, an education undertaken with authority and responsibility that conserves the potential action of newcomers, against the ideological interpellation of schooling and for the radical boundlessness possible of new beginnings, and action in plurality. This foundation will support the concluding chapter on the modern logic of emancipation and a revision for emancipatory education.

## Chapter V - A New Emancipation

### Introduction

To conclude this thesis, the fifth and final chapter will work with the ideas of the titan Paulo Freire and the ever-more relevant Jacques Ranciere. Continuing the theme of the impossibility of education, the conclusions of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Freire, 1970) will be supported and countered by *The Ignorant Schoolmaster* (Ranciere, 1991) and *Disagreement* (Ranciere, 1999). The primacy of action for Arendt (1958) is echoed by Freire (1970). But of main concern for the father of critical pedagogy is consciousness, and the praxis of action and reflection towards the truth. Part I will explore Freire's pedagogy and its implications for teaching and the truth. From there, part II will put the modern logic of emancipation from Kant to Freire into perspective by Ranciere, through the work of critical educational theorists Gert Biesta (2010; 2017), Charles Bingham (2009; 2010), and Tyson E. Lewis (2012). The impossibility of education stems from the unsustainable act of emancipation and its inability to be institutionalized. However, equality may be asserted and democracy holds the potential for radical politics.

### Part I

Emancipation can be considered as the overcoming of alienation and the struggle for humanization. Freire (1970) recognizes that alienation and dehumanization is a distortion of man's true struggle to become more fully human. The driving force of this ontological state is the unjust order of the economy and the violence of oppression. However, he writes, "Indeed, to admit dehumanization as an historical vocation would lead either to cynicism or total despair. The struggle for humanization, for the emancipation of labor, for the overcoming of alienation, for the affirmation of men and women as persons would be meaningless" (Freire, 1970, p. 44).

## EDUCATION, ORDER, AND THE SPECTER OF EMANCIPATION

To emancipate oneself and others is to contend with the alienating situation that prevents humanization. This order, not just specific oppressive classes or groups, is the linkage between oppressed and oppressors. Biesta (2017) notes that Freire's emancipation of both oppressors and oppressed is the foremost concern. He argues, "This also makes clear why Freire's pedagogy is not a pedagogy *for* the oppressed where, through a powerful intervention that the oppressed are set free, but a pedagogy *of* the oppressed" (Biesta, 2017, p. 56). That the oppressed are the subjects of this emancipatory pedagogy is in line with classic Marxist tradition.

In his article, "Mapping the Constellation of Educational Marxisms", Lewis (2012) links Freire's focus on the oppressed and consciousness to Georg Lukacs work on the subject-object of history. The oppressed, or proletariat in Lukacs' case, hold the unique access to truth as both the subject and object of history. The question of truth or of knowing the world is a task of organization of the oppressed subjectivity. Only their consciousness, against the reification of the social world and economy, could potentially enable a social transformation through action. Against the reification, or "objective" nature of social relations that are actually man-made, can emancipation occur. Lewis (2012) writes, "Thus, the crisis of the proletariat involved not only the economic undermining of capitalism but, equally, the ideological transformation of a proletariat that has been reared in capitalist society under the influence of the life-forms of the bourgeoisie" (p. 100). The dissonance and contradictions of the oppressed consciousness is the site that enables a possibility of emancipation from the reified and alienated world that dehumanizes.

Picking up from Lukacs, Freire (1970) rails against the objective, social world dominated by the economy and its impact on the oppressed consciousness. The 'naturalness' of the world is only perceivable when the oppressed gain understanding of their ability to transform it. Freire

## EDUCATION, ORDER, AND THE SPECTER OF EMANCIPATION

(1970) writes, “In order to have the continued opportunity to express their “generosity”, the oppressors must perpetuate injustice as well. An unjust social order is the permanent fount of this “generosity”, which is nourished by death, despair, and poverty. That is why the dispensers of false generosity become desperate at the slightest threat to its source” (p. 44). To oppose the consciousness and the generosity of the status-quo, the oppressed must engage the world to stir the ‘objectivity’ of it. He continues, “Just as objective social reality exists not by chance, but as the product of human action, so it is not transformed by chance. If humankind produce social reality, then transforming that reality is an historical task, a task for humanity” (Freire, 1970, p. 51). To go against the oppressor’s consciousness is a difficult task. It is a consciousness that dominates and manipulates. Freire (1970) argues, “The oppressor consciousness tends to transform everything surrounding it into an object of its domination. The earth, property, production, the creations of people, people themselves, time - everything is reduced to the status of objects at its disposal” (Freire, 1970, p. 58). Consciousness of the subject-object nature of the oppressed situation must lead to action. In a dialectical relation, the praxis of action and reflection is at the core of the *pedagogy of the oppressed*.

Praxis is the direction of action and reflection towards the transformation of the oppressive, ‘objective’ world. Through praxis, the humanization of the oppressed, the fuller becoming of humanity, and the emancipation from alienation occurs. The process of becoming, Freire (1970) writes, is the open-endedness of humanity and the social world. He states, “Indeed, in contrast to other animals who are unfinished, but not historical, people know themselves to be unfinished; they are aware of their incompleteness. In this incompleteness and this awareness lie the very roots of education as an exclusively human manifestation” (Freire, 1970, p. 84). Through praxis, as an act of becoming, the oppressed recognizes the incompleteness of the world and

## EDUCATION, ORDER, AND THE SPECTER OF EMANCIPATION

themselves. Acting against the objective world and reflecting upon the action can lead to the contemplation of one's own consciousness for further humanization (Lewis, 2012). Praxis is the *authentic* existence of the oppressed then. It is the role of education to enable individuals to engage in this praxis. To educate the oppressed for an authentic life then necessitates emancipation contend with the teacher-student contradiction.

In education specifically, the role of the emancipatory teacher is of the utmost interest for Freire. Educational emancipation should reconcile the teacher-student contradiction as the educator is involved in the praxis along with the students. Together, they act and reflect upon the world (Biesta, 2017). However, Biesta (2017) notes, "It describes, in other words, the situation *after* alienation. But the important question for emancipatory education is not so much what this situation looks like, *but how we might get there* and whether teachers have anything to do with moving towards the situation where the teacher-student contradiction has been resolved" (p. 58). Freire's emancipatory pedagogy, to restate, is one of two parts. Through praxis, the oppressed reveal the world of oppression and work toward its transformation. Secondly, the oppressive reality is renewed and reordered so that the pedagogy becomes one for all, of humanity derived from the collapse of the oppressed and oppressor conflict (Biesta, 2017). But, how do the oppressed go about this, since their perception of reality is submerged to the order of the oppressors? This is the concern for Biesta (2017) and Bingham (2009).

The teacher's role as authority in emancipation is supplemented by the role of the truth of the 'objective' world. While Freire is concerned with the humanization of mankind from alienation, he is primarily directing his emancipation towards ideology. Biesta (2017) notes that oppression is not just a material term but an ideological one. To emancipate the oppressed is to engage in the world and unveil the non-distorted truth. He writes:

## EDUCATION, ORDER, AND THE SPECTER OF EMANCIPATION

For Freire the main problem seems to be the powerful position of the teacher, hence he conceives of emancipatory education as a process where the teacher becomes a fellow-inquirer together with other fellow-inquirers collectively involved in the action-reflection process called praxis. Freire thus takes the teacher out of the equation... This is the reason he defines oppression as *alienation* from this authentic condition and emancipation as a return to this condition. (Biesta, 2017, p. 64)

The resolution of the authority figure, against the reasoning of Arendt (1961), is one piece of the emancipatory education puzzle. However, it does not suffice as Bingham (2009) concurs. Due to Freire's Marxism, the spectatorship of the student in traditional education is to be loathed while the teacher "must resolve the whirligig of domination and submission" (Bingham, 2009).

Through action, the Freirean educator draws the student from spectator to actor in order to engage the truth of the world. This again is not sufficient in resolving the logic of emancipation. The relationship of authority and truth in education is an issue of "teaching's magic circle" (Bingham, 2009).

It is now necessary to understand the limits of Freire and the modern logic of emancipation. Bingham (2009) states, "The problem with traditional teaching is no different from the problem of teaching itself, but progressivism refuses to step outside of the teaching's magic circle. Instead, progressivism offers yet another version of teaching. It offers a form of teaching that must be impossibly vigilant" (p. 411). So vigilant that it reverses the inherent problems of teaching. This inherent problem of teaching is Freire's banking method. Freire (1970) contends that education is inflicted with a narration sickness. "Narration leads the students to memorize mechanically the narrated content. Worse yet, it turns them into

## EDUCATION, ORDER, AND THE SPECTER OF EMANCIPATION

“containers”, into “receptacles” to be “filled” by the teacher. The more completely she fills the receptacles, the better a teacher she is. The more meekly the receptacles permit themselves to be filled, the better students they are” (Freire, 1970, p. 72). The problem of banking education is the problem of all education, traditional, progressive, and yes, even Freire’s critical pedagogy. Although students are brought to awareness of schooling’s ideology and oppression by the teacher’s insight, “teaching’s magic circle” has not been transcended (Bingham, 2009). So although Freire (1970) writes:

This is the “banking” concept of education, in which the scope of action allowed to the students extends only as far as receiving, filing, and storing the deposits... For apart from inquiry, apart from the praxis, individuals cannot be truly human. Knowledge emerges only through invention and re-invention, through the restless, impatient, continuing, hopeful inquiry human beings pursue in the world, with the world, and with each other. (p. 72)

Through convincing the students that there is another truth about the world, the teacher ‘teaches’ the students to not be convinced by reality. Against the banking of ideological domination, students must embrace the truth that the truth is hidden and distrust the authority of the teacher (Bingham, 2009).

It is a bit ironic that Freire (1970) recognizes that one does not emancipate people by alienating them. “Paradoxically, then, they utilize this same instrument of alienation in what they consider an effort to liberate” (Freire, 1970, p. 79). Through explanation, or narration, Freire’s “own method suffers from the very narrative sickness that he condemns in banking education” (Bingham, 2010, p. 656). This narration or banking of knowledge is central to the modern logic

## EDUCATION, ORDER, AND THE SPECTER OF EMANCIPATION

of emancipation that Ranciere (1991; 1999) intends to work out from. This analysis will be pursued in part two.

### **Part II**

This final section will explore the limits of the modern logic of emancipation as elucidated by Paulo Freire and the impossibility of education from a Rancierean framework. Through Biesta (2010; 2017) and Bingham (2009; 2010), Ranciere's lesson about education, equality, and emancipation will support a revision of schooling for democracy. For Ranciere (1991), emancipation is an individual act of teaching and not an institutional schooling method. Ranciere's new logic of emancipation is vital to the role politics needs to play in our contemporary society that is completely devoid of it.

The modern logic of emancipation, or the banking method of education is what Ranciere (1991) would term the explicative order. The explicative order, as mentioned in chapter two, is the school as distributor of explanations, roles, and positions. Traditional, progressive, and even critical approaches to education all involve explication. The perfecting of explications, as in critical pedagogy, has not led to the perfecting of learning. "Instead, a growing complaint begins to be heard: the explicative system is losing effectiveness. This, of course, necessitates reworking the explications yet again to make them easier to understand by those who are failing to take them in" (Ranciere, 1991, p. 6). The explicative order rests on a pedagogical myth of the inequality of intelligence. Superior intelligences explicate the world to inferior intelligences.

Ranciere (1991) terms this enforced stultification. Stultification necessitates understanding from the inferior intelligence. He writes, "From the moment this slogan of duality is pronounced, all the perfecting of the ways of *making understood*, that great preoccupation of men of methods and progressives, is progress toward stultification" (Ranciere, 1991, p. 8).

## EDUCATION, ORDER, AND THE SPECTER OF EMANCIPATION

Explication and stultification rest on “teaching’s magic circle”. To break out of this circle, the student must be emancipated. Ranciere’s Jacotot required his students to use their own intelligence in his teaching. He writes, “The master is he who encloses an intelligence in the arbitrary circle from which it can only break out by becoming necessary to itself. To emancipate an ignorant person, one must be, and one need only be, emancipated oneself, that is to say, conscious of the true power of the human mind” (Ranciere, 1991, p. 15). It is against this logic of explication, of stultification that Ranciere’s project rests on. Rather than emancipate, stultification ‘stupefies’ students and keeps them ‘in their place’ (Biesta, 2017). Against the order of things and the circle of powerlessness in teaching, is an intelligence beginning to emancipate itself in the circle of power, verifying the fundamental equality of intelligence.

The link between education and emancipation is one rooted in the Enlightenment. And yet, as explored with Freire (1970), emancipation has been intimately intertwined with what Ranciere (1991) would deem explication and subsequently stultification. The term emancipation means to give away ownership or to relinquish authority over another. The other, through emancipation, becomes independent and free (Biesta, 2010). Biesta (2010) writes, “Enlightenment thus entailed a process of becoming independent or autonomous, and for Kant this autonomy was based on the use of one’s reason” (p. 42). Reasoning, for Kant, was not a predetermined purpose, but rather a contingent possibility that entailed man’s highest purpose. The only way to achieve this ultimate purpose was through education. Moreover, emancipation, from Rousseau onwards, was to free oneself from the confines of society (Biesta, 2010; 2017). To be freed from society and order toward enlightenment and reason requires an educational intervention. As Ranciere (1991) notes, there is a fundamental inequality inherent in emancipatory education. Equality then, lies somewhere in the future.

## EDUCATION, ORDER, AND THE SPECTER OF EMANCIPATION

Biesta (2010) states, “One of Ranciere’s central insights is that as long as we project equality into the future and see it as something that has to be brought about through particular interventions and activities that aim to overcome existing inequality - such as the education of the masses or the integral pedagogicization of society - we will never reach equality but will simply reintroduce inequality” (p. 57). Opposed to this delaying of inequality, of continued dependency, the assumption of equal intelligence through verification is prescribed. He argues, “The ignorant one himself will do *less* and *more* at the same time. He will not verify what the student has found; he will verify that the student has searched. He will judge whether or not he has paid attention. For one need only be human to judge the fact of work” (Ranciere, 1991, p. 31). Through interrogation and verification, the ignorant teacher affirms the equality of intelligence of the student. Equality is the beginning point rather than the outcome of education. Like Freire, Ranciere (1991) supports a community of students and teachers grounded in the binding of intelligence to another.

This is the way that the ignorant master can instruct the learned one as well as the ignorant one: by verifying that he is always searching. Whoever looks always finds. 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 - something that the learned one, like the ignorant one, excels at. The master is he who keeps the researcher on his own route, the one that he alone is following and keeps following. (Ranciere, 1991, p. 33)

## EDUCATION, ORDER, AND THE SPECTER OF EMANCIPATION

The participation in an intellectual journey, verified by the equality of intelligence, is at the heart of Ranciere's emancipatory method. The interrogation of the search is powerful, it affirms the use of intelligence, a certain consciousness of possibility. "The consciousness of emancipation is above all the inventory of the ignorant one's intellectual capabilities. He knows his language. He also knows how to use it to protest against his state or to interrogate those who know, or who believe they know, more than he knows" (Ranciere, 1991, p. 36). This vigilance of the search and the ability to affirm another's equal use of intelligence is quite distinct from the modern logic or the Freirean approach to emancipation as truth seeking.

Rather than an education that intervenes and provides students the access to specific knowledge or the truth, emancipation based on the equality of intelligence strives for reciprocal reason. Truth for Ranciere, is of little concern because it is imperceivable and incommunicable among men. "Essentially, what an emancipated person can do is be an emancipator: to give, not the key to knowledge, but the consciousness of what can intelligence can do when it considers itself equal to any other and considers any other equal to itself" (Ranciere, 1991, p. 39). Jacotot's universal teaching method affirms the possibility of the ignorant teacher to educate and affirm the equality of intelligence inherent in all of humanity. This essentially means the universality of thinking for oneself. A cliché, but hardly taken up as the key to emancipation. "Truth", Ranciere (1991) notes, "doesn't bring people together at all. It is not given to us. It exists independently from us and does not submit to our piecemenal sentences... The experience of veracity attaches us to its absent center; it makes us circle around its foyer" (p. 58). The orbiting of truth, of vigilant searching is at the root of Ranciere's method; not that orbits coincide. This coincidence of orbits is the result of stultification (Ranciere, 1991).

## EDUCATION, ORDER, AND THE SPECTER OF EMANCIPATION

Biesta (2017) concludes that Ranciere gives up on the idea that the ascertaining of truth is the necessary condition for emancipation or authentic humanity. Rather, as opposed to Freire, emancipatory education's emphasis on truth and authority of the teacher requires an ignorant teacher without insight to the "truth". The ignorant teacher affirms the search and verifies the equality of intelligence that moves like a "parabola" around the incommunicable truth. "Intelligence is not a power of understanding based on comparing knowledge with its object. It is the power to make oneself understood through another's verification. And only an equal understands an equal... This synonymy on which each man's intellectual capacity is based is also what makes society, in general, possible" (Ranciere, 1991, p. 73). Emancipation then, runs on the verification of equals using their intelligences together. The role of truth in society, in public, and in democracy is of concern next. Ranciere is skeptical of equality as a regime, of institutionalizing emancipatory universal teaching; any attempt will rest on inequality rather than equal intelligence. To conclude Ranciere's ignorant lesson, "Truth settles no conflict in the public place. It speaks to man only in the solitude of his conscience. It withdraws the moment that conflict erupts between two consciences" (Ranciere, 1991, p. 90).

If truth settles no conflict in public, then emancipatory education will never be institutionalized in society. Broader society, a product of political order, rests on the institution of schooling that explains the particular social logic. Bingham (2010) states that truth is a function of education and that education is a metaphor for the truth in the way that explanations or the explicative order distributes knowledge and position throughout society. "Rather, the legacy of the school's explanation of social order should be understood as a continuing and inevitable facet of schools as they function today in all sorts of political configurations" (Bingham, 2010, p. 652). The performance of explanations by the school denies the possibility of

## EDUCATION, ORDER, AND THE SPECTER OF EMANCIPATION

an emancipatory education to be institutionalized. He continues, “It is not simply that the school functions to *reflect* or *reproduce* the social order... Rather, the school performs social order itself by way of its explanations. The school *explains* society by demonstrating, through explanation, that everything that needs to happen in society can be rectified, changed, or improved by means of explanation” (Bingham, 2010, p. 653). This is why the school can and will never institutionalize the project of emancipation and equality. All school must explain society, and even if society progresses, the explication of progress will necessitate a foundation of inequality.

For this reason Ranciere (1991) states, “There cannot be a class of the emancipated, an assembly or a society of the emancipated. But an individual can always, at any moment, be emancipated and emancipate someone else... who no longer play the comedy of the inferior superiors. A society, a people, a state, will always be irrational” (p. 98). If the condition of society is fundamentally irrational, then Ranciere’s educational method will ultimately be unsuccessful. The practice of intellectual emancipation from the assertion of equality however will survive. “Intellectual emancipation is rejected by ‘every social order’ because intellectual emancipation does not follow the logic of explanation, a logic that social order cannot do without” (Bingham, 2010, p. 654). As schools explain society, the social order that allows and promotes educational emancipation is no order at all. Yet, the promise of the individual affair, that verification and interrogation of another’s equal intelligence is one of radical hope. This is why Bingham (2009) notes that anytime an educational method is taken too seriously, when taken out of context between equals, it becomes a farce and the death of the method. To quote Bingham (2010) at length:

There cannot be a method of education that does not partake in the explanatory order of sociality. As soon as any form of education becomes a method, then it

## EDUCATION, ORDER, AND THE SPECTER OF EMANCIPATION

will, by virtue of being a method, be an explanation of how human beings learn, and what they should learn. As soon as any form of education becomes a method, then it becomes a ‘school’ in four sense of the word. It becomes a school in the sense that it establishes a practice that has followers. It becomes a school in the sense that it creates circumstances for a number of students to be educated in a similar way. It becomes a school in the platonic sense that it establishes an orderly body of knowledge that contributes to the social order. And, it becomes a school in the jacotist sense that it reaffirms the explanatory order of knowledge acquisition. (Bingham, 2010, p. 655)

This apt conclusion from Bingham (2010) on the ambivalence of Ranciere’s (1991) ignorant educational method may not deliver any ease of mind about the emancipatory possibilities of schooling, it does however, ground the practice of politics against social order. However, Ranciere (1991) notes, “One must choose between making an unequal society out of equal men and making an equal society of unequal men. Whoever has some taste for equality shouldn’t hesitate: individuals are real beings, and society a fiction. It is for real beings that equality has value, not fiction” (p. 133). Through emancipatory education, teachers and individuals verify and interrogate equality in an unequal society. This is the essence of politics and political activity. By emancipating oneself and others, one engages in what Ranciere terms subjectification.

Subjectification is the disidentification with one’s ascribed position in the order of society. This distribution of positions, knowledge, and the sensible is the *police* mentioned in chapter two. “Politics is a matter of subjects or, rather, modes of subjectification. By subjectitification I mean the production through a series of actions of a body and a capacity for

## EDUCATION, ORDER, AND THE SPECTER OF EMANCIPATION

enunciation not previously identifiable within a given field of experience, whose identification is thus part of the reconfiguration of the field of experience” (Ranciere, 1999, p. 35). The two logics that determine an individual’s position in society is the egalitarian and police. The police logic then, ensures a particular configuration of action and experience. He adds, “For a thing to be political, it must give rise to a meeting of police logic and egalitarian logic that is never set up in advance” (Ranciere, 1999, p. 32). Like the equality inherent in educational emancipation, politics is the rupture in the appearance of naturalness of order. By engaging equally with the *police*, what was once invisible becomes visible and what was unheard or just noise becomes intelligible (Ranciere, 1999).

At the core of this rupture with order of the sensible and the disavowal of one’s particular inclusion in society is the assertion of the egalitarian logic. Masschelein and Simons (2010) notes that there is no outside of society, no exclusion is possible in the *police order*. Identification with the order and its explanation of society is expected and the antithesis of politics. “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” (Ranciere, 1999, p. 29). By asserting the logic of egalitarianism, the equality of intelligence inherent to all, is to confront the predetermined logic of one’s position and qualification. This is why Ranciere (1999) claims, “Politics exists simply because no social order is based on nature, no divine law regulates human society” (p. 16). The only divine law is the one of equality, but again, as mentioned previously, no society and no order can admit this law.

This divinity has been despised from the beginning of time, it is the hatred of democracy, of the fundamental equality of humanity. Explanations of social order, myths and stories are rife with reasons and logics for the status quo and the naturalness of the given world. “The fable of

## EDUCATION, ORDER, AND THE SPECTER OF EMANCIPATION

the war of all against all is as idiotic as all fables of origins. But behind this feeble tale of death and salvation, something more serious makes itself felt, the declaration of of the ultimate secret of any social order, the pure and simple equality of anyone and everyone: there is no natural principle of domination by one person over another” (Ranciere, 1999, p. 79). The antidote to the tales of domination and order is democracy. Democracy is the disruption of the “smooth working of order” by the paradoxical process of two worlds in one. This notion of two worlds in one, again, is the incommensurable confrontation between egalitarian logic and police logic of subjectification.

Subjectification, like Arendt’s (1958; 1961) notion of natality and plurality is about a particular community that is made possible through the radical assertion of equality. It is a specific mode of human being-together (Ranciere, 1999). He adds, “Democracy is not a regime or a social way of life. It is the institution of politics itself, the systems of forms of subjectification through which any order of distribution of bodies into functions corresponding to their “nature” and places corresponding to their functions is undermined, thrown back on its own contingency” (Ranciere, 1999, p. 101). Like emancipation, democracy is not a destination in the future but must be claimed and asserted in the here and now. Like emancipation, democracy will not be institutionalized, and it is certainly not a form of government. Recognizing the radical contingency of order and education is imperative. Impossibility is the condition of educational emancipation and democracy in the contemporary order.

### **Conclusion**

If schooling and learning in the contemporary order is driven by the technical logic of distributing knowledge for one’s position in society as well as the market logic of commodity and survival, then an education for emancipation and democracy is the revision so desperately

## EDUCATION, ORDER, AND THE SPECTER OF EMANCIPATION

needed. Through the work of Freire (1970) the modern logic of emancipation is taken to its limits and supplemented by Ranciere (1991; 1999). If the school holds the radical potential as a space and time outside of the dominant logic, then Ranciere complicates that potential. By recognizing the inability to institutionalize the project of equality or emancipation, the crucial work of the impossibility of education begins with a teacher and their students. By adopting a presumptive equality and verifying the search for truth, the teacher's authority is imperative to bringing newcomers into the world.

The specter of emancipation is also a specter of the teacher in contemporary education. The dominant rationalities of contemporary schooling like lifelong learning, the corporate-technical process of qualification, and the socialization of self-commodification threaten the central figure of the teacher in education. These learner-centered approaches coupled with the increasingly totalitarian technology overtaking the school spell a loss of the teacher's unique authority and opportunity to emancipate students. Against the teacher becoming a ghost in the sphere of education, in Freirean pedagogy, and in data-driven learning, the teacher must be the foremost figure to interrogate and verify the intellectual search and passion of students. Considering the contributions to education theory from Arendt and Ranciere and the realities of contemporary schooling, the role of the teacher must be re-envisioned to resist the totalitarian and self-commodifying subjectivities that are formed in the institution. This approach will not be institutionalized but will be undertaken on an individual basis. The emancipation and equality of all is the ground for the democracy so desperately needed in the impossible world of capital. Impossible to institutionalize in the education driven by technique, data, and the market, the imperative work of teachers is the seed of resistance and emancipation against the dominant order.

## EDUCATION, ORDER, AND THE SPECTER OF EMANCIPATION

Recognizing the impossible is to harken back to the spirit of 1968. In honor of Ranciere's formative years, I am reminded of the slogan "Let's be realistic, let's demand the impossible". This is the impetus for proposing the impossibility of education, connecting historical struggles for emancipation and equality is some of the most important work a teacher can engage in. In light of Ranciere's teacher Althusser, who argued for Marxist philosophy as a non-philosophy, Rancierean emancipatory education then is non-education. Society and education are still stuck in the aftermath of 1968, a certain crisis is visceral. To quote Gramsci (1971), "The crisis consists precisely in the fact that the old is dying and the new cannot be born; in this interregnum a great variety of morbid symptoms appear" (p. 275). Against the morbid, and for natality, an education that rests on the equality of all intelligences is the only hope for the future.

Through this analysis, the thesis is contributing to the body of literature in a novel and is a scholarly addition to critical theory in education. The specter of an emancipation that will never be institutionalized and the specter of a teacher that is increasingly losing its indispensable position in education are unique applications of the work of Arendt and Ranciere. Only by the will of the teacher, emboldened with the conservative authority and responsibility to verify and interrogate intelligence in its' search, can emancipation occur. Emancipation on an individual and direct level. Equal individuals in the rational pursuit for freedom against ideology and alienation is the only hope to survive an increasingly irrational society.

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