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Раздел II.
ИЗ ИСТОРИИ ФИЛОСОФИИ ОБРАЗОВАНИЯ

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AUTONOMY IN KANT AND JACQUES RANCIÈRE
UNDER GERT BIESTA'S VIEW*¹

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***Abstract.** The current research on Education frequently turns to the problems of autonomy and emancipation. This paper considers the concepts of autonomy and emancipation in Immanuel Kant and Jacques Rancière under Gert Biesta's examination. The following question is discussed: can a person be emancipated through education? We will make a brief explanation against or in favor of the new logic of emancipation discussed by Biesta, suggesting the possibility of rethinking the emancipation aiming to the "dependence" criticism, a typical category of current pedagogy, inspired by Kant.*

***Key words:** Education, autonomy, emancipation, Kant, Rancière, Biesta, dependence.*

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КОНЦЕПЦИИ АВТОНОМИИ У КАНТА И ЖАКА РАНСЬЕРА С ТОЧКИ ЗРЕНИЯ ГЕРТА БИЕСТА*²

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***Аннотация.** В современных исследованиях в области образования часто возникают вопросы автономии и эмансипации. В данной работе изучаются концепции автономии и эмансипации в трудах Иммануила Канта и Жака Рансьера в интерпретации Герта Биеста. В нашем концептуальном анализе мы ставим следующий вопрос: может ли личность эмансипироваться посредством образования? Мы приведём аргументы за и против новой логики эмансипации, обсуждаемой Биеста, рассматривая возможность переосмысливания эмансипации в направлении критики категории «зависимости» – типичной, восходящей к Канту категории современной педагогики.*

***Ключевые слова:** Образование, автономия, эмансипация, Кант, Рансьер, Биеста, зависимость.*

Introduction

Current issues on Education deal frequently with autonomy and emancipation, which can only be reached from the ‘subject’. This study, designed to be presented at the forty-sixth conference of the Philosophy of Education Society of Great Britain, aims at seeking the concepts of autonomy and emancipation in Immanuel Kant and Jacques Rancière under Gert Biesta’s examination, although from different theoretical concepts. From the conceptual analysis we will discuss the following question: can a person be emancipated through education?

From the formal pointview, we will present specific elements of the theoretical references, since the accuracy of the analysis claims the concepts specification that will be used in the reflections involving the autonomy and the emancipation in the education, in contrast to some researches that address this issue in Brazilian education. Later, we will make a brief explanation against or in favor of the new logic of emancipation discussed by Biesta³, suggesting the possibility of rethinking the emancipation aiming to the “dependence” criticism, a typical category of current pedagogy, inspired by Kant.

1. The proposed Kantian education: emancipation and autonomy

Kant was a pioneer in studying the meaning of autonomy for human enhancement. According to him, the autonomy is achieved with maturity, when the child is freed from the need of others thinking for herself. This can only be reached through her own understanding and thinking. The achieved

2 *Аспирантская программа в области образования

3 Gert Biesta, “The New Logic of Emancipation: The Methodology of Jacques Rancière” *Educational Theory* 60, no. 1 (2010): 39–59.

autonomy routes to freedom. Indeed, this freedom is subject to moral laws, universal laws. Kant⁴ explains: “(...) the moral law only expresses the autonomy of pure practical reason, i.e. freedom, including the formal condition of all major statements (...)” and says that the result of it is the heteronomy. Thus, heteronomy is obviously antagonistic to autonomy, since it comes from an opposite principle to free will.

The philosopher from Königsberg⁵ shows that there are certain duties that seemed to be followed, for example, the payment of a tax, and the failure to comply with it would mean that the agent disobeyed a socially imposed order, which may lead to a scandal and even cause “general disobedience”⁶. On the other hand, he asserts that the public expression against the charges of this nature, when held by an enlightened man, is absolutely acceptable and correct. The man who does so is considered to be one of autonomous thought.

In the work *About Pedagogy*, written by Kant and published by a disciple in 1923, translated into Portuguese in 1996, he shows that only through education a man can become a real man and that this is the only creature that needs to be educated. In that time, Kant already proposed that education should be designed so that the students could move beyond its initial state: (...) “children should not be educated according to the present state of mankind, but in accordance with a second better state”. He calls this concept a principle of pedagogy⁷. We staked out this passage as a point which coincides with our understanding of education as a process that takes the student from its raw state and puts him in a condition of overcoming.

We find here the possibility of Kant’s approach for the education to the concept outlined by Mendonça⁸, based on Nietzsche, about auto overcoming, linked to the “search for excellence”, when he announces that this search allows for the “revaluation of what we are.” We must remember that the Kantian concept does not converge with Nietzsche’s one. Indeed, Kant is criticized by Nietzsche because he had built the foundation of the metaphysics of morals, or, in other words, by having structured the categorical imperative, inserting the duty as a beacon of morality. But wouldn’t Mendonça’s idea be the same of Kant’s, about promoting the learners from the raw state to a better state? We believe that this approach is possible, although we must seek in Mendonça the deepening of the auto overcoming concept.

4 Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*. (São Paulo: Edições e Publicações Brasil, 1959), 25.

5 In the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant’s main goal is to show which are the limits for human knowledge. In the introduction, we can observe how rich the synthesis between rationalism and empiricism made by him is, as it says, “although all knowledge begins with experience, it does not mean that all of it comes from experience”.

6 Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 106.

7 Kant, *About Pedagogy*. (Fontanella, Fransisco C. Piracicaba: Unimep, 1996), 22.

8 Samuel Mendonça, Nietzsche’s aristocratic education. (Campinas: Unicamp, 2009), 106.

Emancipation is a process that requires auto overcoming so that the autonomy becomes effective.

We believe that the Kantian reading is extremely important for the understanding of emancipation through education; however, it is necessary that from this moment on we begin to reflect on how Kant proposes the conquering of autonomy. In some of his writings, the author stresses the tutor figure in the educational process with a sense of dependency. Then what is the meaning of autonomy for Kant?

The coaching can be made by the parents or by a teacher/master. A unilateral and hierarchical relationship is established, by which emancipation is only achieved in the adulthood. What we propose is that Kantian education does not allow the real achievement of emancipation, exactly by the fact that a dependency relationship with the coacher is kept.

Let us have a look on what Kant tells us in *About the Pedagogy*:

However, it is not enough to train children and urge them to learn to think. They must observe the principles from which all actions derive. It is therefore clear how many things require a real education! But in private education, the fourth point which is the most important - is generally careless, because we teach the children what they deem essential and leave the moral to the preacher.⁹

This passage shows a preoccupation with the “thinking learning,” but Kant immediately says that one should teach the child the “essential”, which was socially determined, according to the moral rules from that moment. Nothing in this statement demonstrates the construction of a new thinking or even no connection is made to enable us to realize the construction of the emancipation process in order to awaken the autonomy of the ‘subject’ by the ‘subject’. The dependence relationship with the coacher remains constant.

Next, Kant separates discipline from instruction and points out the difference between the teacher’s figure from the governor:

The education covers the careness and training. This is: a) *negative*, i.e., discipline, which prevents defects, 2) *positive*, i.e., instruction and steering and, in this respect, belongs to the culture. The steering is the practice of what was taught. Here we can see the difference between the *teacher*, who is simply a master and the *ruler*, who is a guide. The first ministers the school education, the second, the life education.¹⁰

This excerpt highlights Kant’s idea about the transformation in humanity (discipline) from animality and states this as a basic principle of education. The other form of education is referred as the instruction and guidance. Both terms suggest the need for the figure of the teacher as mediator, so that the autonomy perspective in the sense of the tutor’s absence finds no support in Kant’s writings.

⁹ Kant, *About Pedagogy*, 28.

¹⁰ Kant, *About Pedagogy*, 30.

Finally, after a systematic study of *About Pedagogy*, we can affirm that education proposed by Kant does not suggest the construction of emancipation and, consequently, the autonomy, with the same predicate referred by Biesta¹¹. We will further develop this issue from which we can find support to criticize the Kantian emancipation. It is worth noting, for last, Kant's position¹² on: "Man is the infant, student, disciple." Disciple (lat. *Discipulus*) comes from *discere*, which means to learn, under the connotation of following the other's doctrines or ideas. This positioning is crucial to have a clear perception that the autonomy and the emancipation in Kant relate to the dependence of the tutor, necessarily.

Returning to the first question that we have formulated: is it possible to emancipate "a subject" through education? The answer seems to be no, if we consider that education is inspired on Kant. Indeed, are there other meanings of autonomy and emancipation? This is what we intend to develop from Rancière's thought, especially in light of Biesta's analysis. Kant's educational proposal demonstrates the eternal dependence from the tutor, from the teacher as the one who leads the learner through the paths he chooses and does not propose autonomy as a constituent process of education, because it assumes the assumption of inequality, in which the student needs a superior to assign him to the correct paths in life.

Thus, in the proposed Kantian education we can not see the possibility of the student to be emancipated, because we understand emancipation as the ability to create alternatives of choices and not the ability to choose what is defined by another. In other words, we understand emancipation as the construction of the individual by the individual, without the necessary relationship with the tutor, since for the author, autonomy is related to a state reached in the adulthood and as we shall see, Biesta¹³ states that "emancipation is not, however, as simple as a change of position from childhood to adulthood."

2. A (re)view on emancipation statute in the promotion of autonomy

Considering the preliminary analysis of the elements from Kant's thought, we will now examine Biesta's argument, specifically in the text dealing with the emancipation under the view from the philosopher Jacques Rancière. Biesta points out that after World War II, some educators began, initially in Germany, to argue that it is not possible to conceive an individual emancipation without a broad social transformation. Criticisms were made about this conception, and Klaus Mollenhauer – inspired by Jürgen Habermas – was one of the Germans who brought opposition to this thinking.

11 Biesta, "The New Logic of Emancipation: The Methodology of Jacques Rancière", 2010.

12 Kant, *About Pedagogy*, 11.

13 Biesta, "The New Logic of Emancipation: The Methodology of Jacques Rancière", 2010.

He examines the emergence of a group of American educators, whose thought has its locus in the critical theories of education and that the concept of emancipation emerges from the analysis of structures, practices and theories of oppression, influenced by the contributions from Michel Apple, Henry Giroux and Peter McLaren. This group, according to Biesta¹⁴, is based on the precedents of Dewey, Counts and Freire.

After highlighting the historical conception of emancipation – for which he uses Immanuel Kant as an important interlocutor for the understanding of this concept – Biesta argues that there is a logic built over the emancipation, surrounded by several aspects.

First, emancipation requires outside intervention, an intervention, even more by someone who is not submissive to the power that needs to be overcome¹⁵. This idea suggests that emancipation is seen as something that is done to someone and that it is based on an inequality between the emancipator and the emancipated, and in this sense, equality is the result of emancipation.

The author argues that this concept of emancipation suggests that the teacher is the possessor of knowledge and the student is the one who still does not know. Explaining the world is a task for the educator so that the student becomes as knowledgeable as his teacher. This logic is pervaded by problems and contradictions¹⁶

This is the second aspect and, we believe, the key point of Biesta's criticism, which we share. The first contradiction presented by the author refers to this pedagogical concept where the professor is the measurer of the knowledge. In this sense, the student who does not have access to knowledge, depends essentially on the intervention of an intermediary – the teacher – and the dependence situation is installed. Biesta asks:

This raises the question of when this dependence will actually disappear. As soon as the emancipation is reached? Or the one who is emancipated remains eternally grateful to his or her emancipator for the gift of emancipation?¹⁷

The questions presented suggest other questions, according to the author: should slaves be grateful to former masters for their freedom? Should women be grateful for the men to have been released? Should children be grateful to their parents for freeing them? Or should they claim their freedom from the beginning? What we believe is that everyone should start from a free state. Free to think, free to express thoughts, free to pursue knowledge. We must understand that freedom is the sense of the absence of the submission, i.e., that the other does not need to mediate knowledge.

14 Biesta, "The New Logic of Emancipation: The Methodology of Jacques Rancière", 2010.

15 Biesta, "The New Logic of Emancipation: The Methodology of Jacques Rancière", 2010.

16 Biesta, "The New Logic of Emancipation: The Methodology of Jacques Rancière", 2010.

17 Biesta, "The New Logic of Emancipation: The Methodology of Jacques Rancière", 45.

The inequality is reaffirmed if we assume that the teacher is one who has more knowledge, creating a position of superiority of the emancipator in relation to the emancipated, which in turn is made inferior. The inequality, then, pervades this modern logic of emancipation.

The third point of Biesta's criticism on mistrust and suspicion under those to be emancipated, since the emancipators dictate what the real problems are and the needs of those who await emancipation.

The author cites Jacques Rancière referring to the teacher as the one who "lifts the veil of obscurity of things" that "throws the deep darkness to lighten the surface, brings the false appearance of the area behind the secret abyss of reason"¹⁸. In this sense, the teacher is led to the figure of a master, the only holder of all knowledge and the student reduced to that who awaits someone who will show the way forward.

We agree with Biesta's criticism on the educational model that comes from the inequality of knowledge between teacher and students as an assumption for the educational process. In this sense, we believe that the student is made inferior like if he knew nothing and needed to receive the knowledge of who owns it. Education in Brazil, at several levels, follows this logic and Biesta's criticism would work as an alternative for the stagnation problem.

Our understanding of the educational process focus more on a sense of exchanging experiences, in which the teacher has different experiences from the learner, but does not ignore that the student also has an identity under construction, which can and should be considered and respected in educational activities.

Biesta states that Rancière sees emancipation as something that is done by the individual, and not as an external act, sponsored by someone to someone. This view shows a traditional way of conceiving both emancipation and education.

Rancière tells, in *The Ignorant Schoolmaster* at work, the story of a French school teacher named Joseph Jacotot, exiled in Belgium, which unlike the educational model we have been finding, proposed education based on the assumption of equal intelligence of human beings, calling the method of "universal education".

Jacotot went through an experience that made him to reflect on the educational act based on the explanation, which assumes that there are two minds, one inferior – that of the ignorants, the learners – and the other superior – the knowledge minds, the teachers. Jacotot's experience was lived during his exile in Belgium, when he had to teach people whose language was unknown by him. His experience showed that the explanation is not required for the students to learn. His students learned through their own efforts on the books. "This does not mean that they have learned without a master, they just learned without an explainer master"¹⁹

18 Biesta, "The New Logic of Emancipation: The Methodology of Jacques Rancière", 46.

19 Biesta, "The New Logic of Emancipation: The Methodology of Jacques Rancière", 54.

According to Rancière's theory, emancipation only exists when the intelligence obeys only itself, i.e., when a person uses its own intelligence, without the need to use the intelligence of others. Rancière points out that this is one of the problems of education: to reveal "an intelligence itself" and that the teacher's role is divided into two fundamental acts: "he *asks*, he calls the speech, i.e., the manifestation of an intelligence that was not aware of herself or that had already given up" and "he *verifies* that intelligence work is done carefully"²⁰.

The teacher's act of 'asking' should not be understood, according to the author, in a Socratic manner, where the teacher asks the student who is guided to answer what the teacher already knows. What Jacotot proposes is that the student makes his own explanation and the infinite is the limit for his answers. For Rancière, emancipation is possible in this way, since the intelligence of a being is considered equal to all beings, not having a "hierarchy of intellectual capacity". What exists is an "inequality of manifestations of intelligence"²¹.

Biesta explains that, for Rancière, the emancipation does not mean that all intelligences are equal, but rather assume the use of a person's intelligence based on the intelligence equality. Finally, Rancière believes that political parties, governments, armies, schools or institutions are not able to promote emancipation because all of them assume inequality; he also believes that universal education can only be directed at individuals and not at societies.

Biesta announces that the central idea of Jacques Rancière is based on four concepts: equality, democracy, emancipation and politics; and we believe these should be the foundation of a possible education to encourage learners to autonomy.

Conclusion

Assuming some aspects of emancipation and autonomy, seeking to answer the question: can a person be emancipated through education, we used Immanuel Kant and Jacques Rancière – through Gert Biesta's analysis – to put in contrast two different views about those concepts.

We started from Kant, since we noticed that, although far away from the current times, his pedagogy is still a remarkable force in Brazilian education, in the sense of positioning the teacher hierarchically above the students.

As Rancière explains, through Jacotot's experience, the teacher should not be the one who explains everything to everybody. We would be talking about a teaching method designed in 1600 by Comenius, "the universal art of teaching everything to everyone"²² that had never been surpassed. In our vision of education based on theories and practices and Rancière, the teacher should be the one that

20 Rancière, *apud.*, Biesta, "The New Logic of Emancipation: The Methodology of Jacques Rancière", 54.

21 Rancière, *apud.*, Biesta, "The New Logic of Emancipation: The Methodology of Jacques Rancière", 55.

22 Maria Eugenia Castanho; Sergio E. M. Castanho, "Contribution to the study of history teaching in Brazil", *Anped Annual Meeting*, 31, 2008, 2.

encourages students to think, to reflect on a phenomenon, giving conditions for him to find the meaning, value, temporality and meaning to life.

The teacher must start from the assumption that each student has its own experience that makes him unique in his intelligence. For Edelstein²³, the practices of schooling are historical and social, happening in concrete time and space. Proposed activities must be intentional and may follow two directions: a prescriptive way, invariable or filled with alternatives and possibilities that are made between the subject and the object.

We believe in the second practice in which each student is able to use its own autonomy, when treated as a being that has its own characteristics, its own intelligence to build its social and individual relationship with the phenomenon.

This specific school practice assumes the triangular relationship: knowledge-teacher-student and, therefore, ceases to be individual practice and becomes a social practice, transcending the individual intentions. Collective practices should not be ignored, but should permeate the school environment, the opportunity to treat the individual ‘subject’, so that he can recognize itself as an emancipated being.

In Brazil, Paulo Freire brings a line of thought quite close to Rancière’s, with regard to respect for individuality. Clearly this research did not deal with aspects of Freire’s theory; however, we envision a possible link between these authors. This educator demonstrates, in a number of works, that one of the principles of education is founded on the respect for individuality and autonomy of the learner. In *Pedagogy of Autonomy*, firstly published in 1996, Freire refers to the educational relationship established between the teacher and the student, in the sense of the enhancement of autonomy so that the teacher can succeed in the educational task and for the learner to be respected as an individual. The teacher’s respect for the autonomy and dignity of the student is called by Freire “ethical imperative” and this relationship must guide educational activities so that an effective promotion of learner’s autonomy is reached.

So, we believe that the concept of emancipation and autonomy enunciated by Biesta, based on Rancière, reveals itself as a stimulant to the reflections of philosophy of education and, of course, can contribute to the teaching practice at several levels. More than that, to consider the emancipation under the autonomy and the empowerment of the individual against the decisions to be taken, seems to us a noble way to enhance the education. We must argue, for the last, that teacher’s education that permeates the emancipation as we saw in Rancière’s writings, from Biesta’s pointview, shows another conception of education, which emphasizes the possibility of rebuilding the concept of education. We know that, while the teachers do not see themselves as educators instead of predictors of facts, the autonomy of the learners, as well as the respect for their intelligence may be affected.

23 Patricia Laura Torriglia, “School organization: the curriculum as a knowledge mediation”, *Anped Annual Meeting*, 30.

Thus, we understand that the task of educating is not simple, however if the educator's goal is to deal with autonomous students and conceive them as emancipated beings, efforts should be redoubled so that each student is respected as a unique being, with skills that humanize them, such as the reason, emotions and especially the ability to make decisions for themselves. Here we have Biesta's contribution for human emancipation and autonomy.

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EDUCATION AS A MOVEMENT OF HUMAN EXISTENCE (JAN PATOČKA'S PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION)

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