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1. MATERNAL LANGUAGE AND ICT

The Conflict with Modern Apparatuses in Art Education

INTRODUCTION

From my experience of teaching technology in the context of art education and to digitally excluded people, I start by reflecting about my concerns about how to start a process of knowledge towards the unknown. We need to understand not only the engagement of a teacher and researcher on this voyage, but also the question of how to involve the communities and the students in this specific case. We recognise that this march, although nowadays moribund, was started long ago and we now need to reinvigorate it, backed by references such as little Ernesto from Marguerite Duras or professor Jacotot revisited by Rancière. Starting from the student's problem one can learn, by itself, with what one already knows, and with the teacher who is willing to offer herself to what she does not know. By doing this we can we get closer to the Panecastic march. This way, which does not set a direction, is disperse, because it refers precisely to what we develop in this work about the emancipation and the maternal language of each individual. Moreover, it contrasts with the imposition of the digital media that determine the instruction and the methods, or the way of the known. It is in this conflict, between emancipation plus the maternal language of each one and the instructive and normalising determinism of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) that I discuss from my own teaching experience in art education, or from my own involvement with info-excluded communities. To do this I rely on a theoretical corpus that passes, essentially by Rancière, Agamben, Foucault and McLhuan in order to find profanity strategies with these apparatuses in the context of art education. Finally, I discuss the problem at the political level, because what is at stake is precisely the constituent power of ICT in the plan of current cybernetic Fordism and the destituent power that resides in the artistic processes.

STARTING ON WHAT HAS ALREADY BEEN STARTED

In a time where, apparently, there is nothing more to do than to denounce the end, at the same time that we are tempted to renounce it, maybe it makes more sense to re-announce the beginning.¹ We are not speaking of restarting, but of re-announcing we are not speaking of repeating it, like the student who repeats the sentence on

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the blackboard to not make the mistake again, but of understanding the relation of this eternal return with the will of power, where the end and the beginning become indistinguishable.²

To start a class is to notice that it has already begun, that there is no learning to inaugurate and that the absolute start does not exist. The teacher's task is not to explain what the students, supposedly, do not know, as if the students could not know it by themselves. However, the task may be that of following up, updating and continuing the translation of everything to which we are exposed from the first moment that we are faced with language. To do that, the task can begin in what has already been started, as if beginning was no more than translating that which has already been started and, why not, preventing the finishing of that which has been started. As we move closer to the Panecastic³ march, advocated by Professor Jacotot, in an attempt to actualise the circle of power on which Rancière reflected:

[A] circle of *power* homologous to the circle of powerlessness that ties the student to the explicator of the old method. [...] The circle of powerlessness is always already there: it is the very workings of the social world, hidden in the evident difference between ignorance and science. The circle of power, on the other hand, can only take effect by being made public. But it can only appear as a tautology or an absurdity. (Rancière, 1999, p. 15)

It is by opposing this old method that Jacotot creates a method called “Universal Teaching”, in which an ignorant can teach another ignorant what he does not know. Randomness and translation allowed Jacotot to have an intellectual experience, when he saw himself teaching in his language, that was not the language of his students, and asked them to answer in that same language. Randomness, often in the form of improvisation and translation, are also part of the method itself that has the following axiom as a principle: *Everything is in everything. Nothing is in nothing*. This axiom became the basis of Professor Jacotot's exercises that can begin from any human manifestation, assuming, in this way, that all intelligences are equal. Rancière sums it up as “the tautology of power. All the power of language is in the totality of a book. All knowledge of oneself as an intelligence is in the mastery of a book, a chapter, a sentence, a word” (Rancière, 1999, p. 26). According to Rancière, the method begins from two premises: the equality of intelligences and the opposition of emancipation to instruction (Rancière, 1999, pp. 1–18). Nevertheless, it is mainly a method of *will*. “One could learn by oneself and without a master explicator when one wanted to, propelled by one's own desire or by the constraint of the situation” (Rancière, 1999, p. 12).

Because we are dealing with the beginning of a (dis)order, for this work it is important to clarify that I do not want to assume any methodological dogmas: on the contrary, I think that following the reasoning of Jacotot, I assume that the method is another and I want to start the discussion from this possibility. More than that, I am interested in this reflection of Rancière about the equality of intelligences and the opposition of emancipation to instruction. Moreover, the fact that Universal Teaching

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can lead to the results of the other, plus the idea of opposition of emancipation to instruction, implies in a certain sense the coexistence of several methods and non-methods. Once we are aware of the open possibilities, by the equality of intelligences and by the opposition of emancipation to instruction, we can confront the several methods, speeches and the edified epistemological fields. A student that is aware of herself and of the power of intelligence needs these fields to get out of herself and to question herself. Conflicts and dissents that require improvisation and poetic translations—the core of the learning process. *Everything is in everything* and everywhere we can see the “power of the human mind”; to be aware of this power is to be emancipated. Here is the principle that allow us to enter in the circle of power, announcing the emancipation is *starting it* (Rancière, 1999, pp. 15–45), recognising that it has begun. *Everything is in everything* and we can start anywhere, curiously in this text I will insist in starting it now in what has already started, more precisely, in the beginning of my classes.

Therefore, I write this text as I try to start my classes, with one text, one image, a video, anything that can take over my voice. Anything that precedes it, that deactivates the scenario of the class, the school, the teacher, the master and the apprentices. Not having great expectations and recognising that this start is no more than resuming the lesson and the apparatuses that we use in it, I search for something that deactivates the seed that I sow. I start searching for who’s hidden behind the mask of my student. I search for her voice, without imposing this search, without denouncing it, respecting, in a certain sense, the mask and its silence. I only denounce my wish that this voice interrupts me, or even, that it precedes me. However, due to mass education in many classes, it is impossible for the students to present themselves and I am forced to start by presenting myself. In fact, all the classes are about presentation and representation, it is all about bringing to the moment what is already present. What is already present is the inevitability of learning, but for the text that has already begun it will make more sense to say that the student and his study is already present.⁴

TO LEARN WITH WHAT WE KNOW

Some years ago, I looked to the issue of how can I present myself, maintaining the precedence of the student, not only the student I am, but the student that I do not know. Then I put in scene a student before me, Ernesto from the movie *En rachâchant* by Danièle Huillet and Jean-Marie Straub. The same Ernesto that appears in the tale by Marguerite Duras, translated in the illustrations of Bernard Bonhomme, and again translated to this movie by the Straub couple. Filmed as if he were an insect being analysed in that classroom laboratory, in an inquisition scene played by the Master: Ernesto does not want to go to school because there they only “teach things that he does not know”.

I begin from that movie, not losing sight of Ernesto, and I start fantasising about his problem, trying to understand what it means for a student to learn what she does

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not know? What does it mean, from the teacher's point of view, to teach things that students do not know? What does "what one does not know" and "what one knows" mean, and how can we place thinking here, or should I say, the power of thinking?

For the student, maybe learning what she does not know usually becomes studying while ignoring what one already knows. What the student might consider as already know, is to learn and to study with what she has, from her language, in the way she learnt it, at the same time as building her perspective and her world. Keeping the student away from it, as when, for example, a teacher explains what the student does not know, is to keep the student away from her singularity, her vision of language and his power of thought. What becomes established is the relation between the teacher and her knowledge, the difference between ignorance and science, finally the circle of impotence. Thus, we break the relation of the student with the unknown and thus we keep her away from 'what she does not know'. Because the approximation to what 'one does not know' is not to listen and to repeat the truth, it is rather the pleasure of searching it. To feel the truth one must *want* to take this approach, from what one knows, assuming the equality of intelligences. That is to say, to put a student in an unknown area is, in first place, to put her in what she already knows. And does she know herself?

"Connais-toi toi-même" [know yourself] (Jacotot, 1824, p. 18) so many times repeated by Jacotot, particularly, in his book *Musique*, is a fundamental issue in art education and was the last breath of his panecastic disciples (Rancière, 1999, p. 139). *Gnothi seauton* is also the breath of the ruins of Apollo's temple in Delphi. Orphic words blow and are blown over the west since its birth. The destination and the origin of language hide the way that they open from the individual and civilization.⁵ In the same way that we find in the heritage of the language the conflicts of a society, a student can find herself in her conflicts and in her language. Maybe that can be a first focus of investigation, to get to know what one already knows and place on the horizon what one does not know about oneself. This is completely the opposite of the old and triumphant method, which starts by searching for the atomisation and mathematisation, whose paradigm is enunciated when we begin reading in B, A, BA⁶ and spreads out to any subject. This first trap laid by teachers on the students is particularly hard to be freed of for some students, as is the case of the little Yusuf from the movie *Bal*, by Semih Kaplanoglu. Yusuf tries to read without spelling like his colleagues, but this division of words in the corresponding letters and phonemes disturbs him. That division, which implies the sum, is not a part of his world. Yusuf dreams against the roots of the trees and between the sound of a branch of the tree, a whole story can be suspended, one life. That sound does not fit into a phoneme, or in the sum of all the letters and words. It does not fit into an image, or in the sum of all the images, that sound does not fit into a sum. Rather, it fits in the absence and translation of that sound. To learn a word as a sum of letters, to learn time as the sum of events, in short, to learn to sum and to make calculations is a necessary part of the inevitability of learning that needs no school and, simultaneously, is what sustains it. Support or obstacle, these 'sums' do not operate in the same way for each of us, their

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effects are not clear, but one thing is certain; they prioritise and govern knowledge, they fit perfectly in the accumulation and serialisation paradigms of our society.

In this work, it is important to discuss the possibility of a student being able to start from what she already knows. Starting from this principle, it may be interesting for the teacher to begin a class, not from what she knows, but from what the student already knows. Simultaneously, the teacher can enter in a subject that she does not know and learning can take place. The student starts from what she knows, from anything, because *everything is in everything*. The teacher starts going towards what she does not know and both set the meeting point in the unknown. That is the Panecastic march.

It seems that Ernesto and Yusuf need to gather with Professor Joseph Jacotot. He stated precisely that: “il faut que je vous apprenne que je n’ai rien à vous apprendre” [I need to teach you that I have nothing to teach you] (Jacotot, 1822, p. 11). Nevertheless, for a teacher, nowadays, what does it mean to teach that she has nothing to teach? What sense has Universal Teaching and the reflection of Rancière at a time when ICT leads the instruction without, apparently, a Master? Maybe the most important is the urgency that the current political and technological context and the art education context itself set on the necessity of ideas and evoked principles. So, let us restart in what has already started.

FROM HYPOTHESIS TO HYPOTHESIS

I will start from a rather simple hypothesis: in the current climate of *cybernetic Fordism*, in which a big corporation becomes a prototype of artificial intelligence, (Barbrook, 2005, p. 62), the world is shaped by the apparatuses of the big corporations. From healthcare to education, the state is transformed into a big corporation with similar apparatuses and the digital carries out a big part of our instruction. We live in a huge feedback of production and mass consumption, in which the processes of communication, information, and control are defined, established, and regulated by the big multinational companies. Although it might seem paradoxical, there is a symbiosis between the old methods, the paradigms of the digital economy that reprioritise education and reduce the possibilities of emancipation. This scenario is particularly disturbing in art education, in that the singularities and identities are jeopardised by normalising processes. The hypothesis that I raise comes from the experience as a teacher of technologies in art education about which I will make a small reflection and, after that, I will try to identify the origins of this paradigm and what strategies we can elaborate to face this problem of digital media on art education.

I have been teaching modules related to technology in art education since 2002, and I have come across a problem concerning so-called digital media and their use in artistic processes: I soon realised that classes invariably fragment into two groups: students who establish a hostile relationship with digital media, where their participation is limited to the level of the exercise/instruction, and even this

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reluctantly; and fascinated students, whose fascination turns out to be disruptive in the artistic process and the use of digital media is reduced to an operability, which relegates artistic processes to a level of literality and communication. In this text, I am going to try to suspend a certain stigma on digital media or “new media” and artistic processes, generated by some artists and commentators.⁷ The truth is that, even agreeing with Rancière about the unprecedented possibilities that the “new technologies” offer, I recognise in my experience some pitfalls that are even more dangerous in the field of arts education.

The first pitfall is due to them being apparatuses whose instruction is part of their nature, or rather, digital media have in their use, at the time of their use, a set of instructions and procedures for their use, in which the norm and the application get into a zone of indistinction. This is particularly complicated on the level of arts education because: on the one hand, it calls into question a truly autonomous use and thus, in my opinion, raises the issue of the essential conflict of instruction/emancipation; On the other hand, the fact of restricting a use to a predetermined instruction in the instrument itself also raises the issue the characteristic gesture of art processes that are often defined by their indeterminacy.

When we start exploring this question, getting deeper, we are faced with one more problem, the problem of the communicative and informative nature of these media, which establish a governing paradigm that redefines education and society. Without having so clear a notion of this problem, at least as a conflict, it already faced me in 1999 at a workshop I coordinated about video in Mozambique, in the framework of the Identidades—intercultural movement. I already at that time asked myself if the Western audiovisual grammar implicit in my technical explanations⁸ – I would today say the apparatus’s implicit technology – determine how participants would use this medium. However, in 2005, in another experience with the Identidades, this time in Brazil, in the Quilombola community of Conceição das Crioulas, the problem was clarified, not only in the field of the imposition of a audiovisual grammar, but on the level of governance exercised by these new apparatuses. What became clear was a community’s charged political will to tell their story in their language, with their own means. This community, long accustomed to fighting for land against a series of problems and adversities, made this fight part of their identity, deciding to tell their story through these *strange digital media*, with languages and grammars that did not belong to them. This experience of a video workshop of just eight days, with the aim of establishing only a first contact with digital media and video production, resulted in the Crioulas Video group, the first Quilombola audiovisual production company, working independently, since then, with these new media.

It took only eight days for a group of young people, without contact with digital media, to gain autonomy to work professionally with these media. My own previous experience in other training workshops and in secondary education was that this autonomy was very difficult to achieve, even for students already familiar with digital media. To me this contrast sets the problem of art education with these media in two senses:

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1. The Conceição das Crioulas community had a political will and a history, a force that facilitated the process, in contrast to most students, in that the first problem often lies more in what to tell than how to tell.
2. The characteristics of digital media, through its instructory power, establish a space of self-learning, allowing the community, after the workshop, after the moment of instruction, to continue to operate and to learn for themselves. This also indicates that at the roots of these apparatuses are instruction and governance technologies that, eventually, determine its use and perhaps this idea of post-instruction is treacherous. The fact that in art education this post-instruction is not as effective with a good portion of students leads us to surmise that both the school and the artistic processes can present some obstacles in affirming these apparatuses.⁹

I often tell the story of the Conceição das Crioulas community to my students, setting out this issue and saying that the problem of the Conceição das Crioulas community is not very different from theirs: Telling their story, in their own way, with their own means, in a way that what they tell and how they tell is founded and confounded with their identity, confounded with their lives. They must therefore try to find in their life a force that is both the origin of what they tell, as well as a way of telling, or rather, as the language and its respective use in the telling. We are thus talking about the search for an own language, with an inner voice and a tongue that we can call maternal; that, although it differs from the mother tongue one speaks, one wants to make as natural as that tongue. That this idea of *maternal language* be confused with both “what you want to tell”, as well as with this “how to tell”. That this language can be confounded with life, can have as much meaning, as it can have emptiness, maybe what is under discussion here is mystery, the mystery of the language of each one. And this is the mystery upon which one must work, simultaneously it is also the pretext for conflict with the apparatuses about which I am supposed to be talking—supposedly, that which I know and students do not.

I should here declare an interest that infects this problem: Much of my life was at school and with these apparatuses, to the extent that my life is school and these apparatuses, or to put it more assertively, these apparatuses and school stole my life. From a certain point it was I who decided to be the thief, my life became an attempt to participate in the theft of myself, the thief of myself, which is perhaps why I am so interested in the disappearance of the teacher and perhaps I have learned to be a student. The difference from my classmates is that I do not have a maternal language, or a paternal language.¹⁰

Many students today share this scholastic and digital life, at a more intense time than I. Perhaps these two apparatuses, school and digital media, form an authentic apparatus for emptying life. It is thus not strange to me that the lives of students are not revealed at the moment in which I make this proposal. In the digitally excluded communities in which I worked it became clear that there is a prior syntax in these apparatuses that conflicts, or even prevents, their maternal language. On the other

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hand, in the “included” this same determinism places them outside of themselves. It is a language that is not theirs, but in which they have lived since they were born, in a haunting eternity. Their references, or the visual culture, as it is called today, are also strongly marked by the digital syntax. Speaking of visual culture and its importance on art education, we could synthesise the two forces at stake: Designification and Disneyfication.¹¹ If, on one hand, the digital imaging software is determined by the processes of design, configuring a syntax that is particular to this craft, on the other hand, there is a world of entertainment that sets the rules of production and consumption of fantasy. Fantasy that is built to make people believe that the rest is real, a *real* that is no longer real.¹² However, more than a confused simulacrum, it is important in this work to understand along this line how this imaginary configures the language of the student. Design and Disney are established here as paradigms trapping the student in an imaginary and ‘creative process’, supposedly, away from the reality, but that cannot be distinguished from that reality.¹³ These are the principles of cybernetic Fordism’s hyper-reality in which, in the case of entertainment, the big corporation is not only a prototype of artificial intelligence, its effects over our perception, desires and imaginary are far from being measurable.¹⁴ One’s own infancy is captured and degenerated in the game and infantilisation of the neoliberal society. It is a universal and uniform imaginary, extremely kitsch, that reflects itself in the references and languages of the students.

This view has always been very present in my experiences in secondary education and in the first years of higher education. Even when what is at stake is a non-proposal,¹⁵ an explicit attempt from the student, encouraging her to do *her* proposal, the effects of schooling are immediate. The student begins by traditional research and first sketches. Then the designified and disneyfied world becomes fashioned and replicated in the majority of students. In this aspect, this weaning from the proposal and schooling is not very fertile and its effects are not very different from a proposal with its own references and themes. I have even set traps in proposals¹⁶ with suggestions that could amplify that effect, as for example, in specifically choosing an author as a starting point. The appropriation and sacralisation of authors and their works led to disastrous processes and results, so that the critical reflection about the stereotyping of the references and the digital and, above all, the denunciation of the absence of a student’s maternal language that is superimposed on all this, became much more interesting. Some students confessed me that this type of proposal had been the most important ones, precisely by enhancing reflection. To me, it is interesting to discuss this end time kitsch and its relation with the original structure of the work of art.¹⁷ Over time and given the fact that I had to share curricular units with other teachers, I have softened the proposals. Criticism and denunciation of this uniformity of processes and results became the most important part. This was done not trying to achieve singular results, but in a search of singularity from the student through questioning her language. Whether it was a proposal or a non-proposal, the most important was to start where had already been started with regards to the student and her maternal language. Any supporting point in the knowledge of the student

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can be discussed as a technique, as a theme, as language; it can be aestheticised, politicised, because everything is in everything, nothing is in nothing.

Maternal language is here a broad term, as when I talk to students, it is clear that it has a relationship with Jacotot and also with each *person's own affairs* (Rancière, 1999, pp. 33–39). Above all I would like to have here an open expression, which can only be narrowed down with an even wider term, such as “life”. For this work, the maternal language is a singularity in such a way amplified to the point of being confounded with life, whether of a student or a community, and it is thus likely to be susceptible to all sorts of readings and misreadings. It could be a starting point, an origin, a will, a duty, that, if it is not present, can be enhanced by a shift to itself, as a return, as an end. It is important, subsequently, to understand the hypothesis – continuing the readings, misreadings and detours – of practising this language being, nothing more, nothing less, putting one’s life into *play*, or, as we are in full detour, of life being *putting-to-work*. We can here have a situation that goes beyond the “technologies of the self” (Foucault, 2002, pp. 16–49), in which the practice of this language becomes a student or community’s form of life, free of *duty and will* (Agamben, 2013).

After this digression, in which we only try to give the term maternal language a wide and free reading to the point of confounding it with freedom, we would like to discuss the conflict that this freedom can represent with modern apparatuses, but not before clearing up some of our terminology.

THE EQUALITY OF WHATEVER

So far, we have dared to deviate from some concepts like the *equality of intelligences* and the *power of thought*. However, what relations and constraints can these concepts have with art education and ICT? What type of magnetism is this that we see in the artistic processes that, on one hand, and in a certain sense, repels the traditional, scientific, hierarchical and educative processes and, on the other hand, attracts the idea of equality and, paradoxically, drifts towards singularity? What is the relation that exists between the equality of intelligences and the artistic processes?

Maybe *some* artistic processes lay bare the evidence of the equality of intelligences and enrol the subject in the circle of power. If we look at those artistic processes that place the subject in an emancipatory relationship with themselves, we are speaking of those processes that have a growing distance between themselves and are even in rupture with the ‘artistic processes’ that the master teaches, or that the student mimics. We are not referring only to techniques and their own instruction, but also to ways of seeing and thinking that, in some way, the master establishes, like what an artistic process must be. We are not diminishing the importance of these processes and their own instruction, we are just specifying what interests us for this work. Processes which the teacher does not know and cannot teach, because they only belong to the student, and because the professor can’t do much more than to say, announce, denounce that the student is able to find their processes in her own

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singularity. Similarly to Jacotot, we believe that the student can learn anything by herself and relate it to all the rest (Rancière, 1999, p. 18). However, in the specific case of the artistic processes, she can also relate herself, essentially, including her life. In this aspect the circle becomes particular, because it uses the power of thought implicit in the equality of intelligences (we are all able to learn anything and relate it with everything). Moreover, it ensures that those who learn *from their life* and puts it at stake (it is anything and simultaneously it is not any, because we're talking of somebody's life), can translate in only one gesture the singularity of what does and what does not relate with all the rest. Nevertheless, the relationship with this 'rest' is in its approach a singularity towards the singular and original, because this approach by an artistic process is an approach to the thought in art as destination and origin. And we want to put this thought here as a "truly metaphysical activity" as Nietzsche elaborated it "in the circle of the eternal recurrence and in the mode of the will to power" (Agamben, 1999b, p. 85). Placing ourselves in relation with this rest that is everything, with the everything that is in everything, through an artistic process or even by looking to a work of art is, in the words of Agamben, to be hurled out into a more original time:

[I]t means ecstasy in the epochal opening of rhythm, which gives and holds back. Only by starting from this situation of man's relationship with the work of art is it possible to comprehend how this relationship—if it is authentic—is also for man the highest engagement, that is, the engagement that keeps him in the truth and grants to his dwelling on earth its original status. In the experience of the work of art, man stands in the truth, that is, in the origin that has revealed itself to him in the poetic act. In this engagement, in this being-hurled-out into the ἐποχή of rhythm, artists and spectators recover their essential solidarity and their common ground. (Agamben, 1999b, p. 102)

We also maintain here the supposition of Jacotot regarding the equality of intelligences for everybody, in the way that this "highest engagement", with the original structure of the work of art is within the reach of everybody. When they place their life at stake by looking, doing (praxis) and above all when thinking, in this contact with what is everyone's life, in that common ground of humanity. However, it is precisely here that the theoretical *corpus* that sustains us becomes insufficient: If on one hand Agamben places this reencounter of artists and spectators in his essential solidarity and in its common ground, the Agamben approach to this meeting is drawn from the side of the artist, opposing Kant, supported by Nietzsche. Rancière, in his search for emancipation, defines other area in the form of dissensus that "is an organisation of the sensible where there is neither a reality concealed behind appearances nor a single regime of presentation and interpretation of the given imposing obviousness on all" (Rancière, 2009, p. 48). Arts and politics come together in this area inside the regime of "aesthetic separation" (Rancière, 1999, pp. 51–82). In this work in particular we want to move these areas and understand possible reconfigurations in art education. Maybe here, we could think of the

disappearance of the artist, intellectual, spectator as bodies in action based on one unique type of body: the student. Someone who is able to think, to learn and to create worlds, someone who, from her body, is able to take her destiny in her hands. More, we can go back to the equality of intelligences in the sharing point which makes us humans and that is, once again, the place of language. Because it is also in this place that it is possible to enrol in the circle of the power of thought, in the same place that *the thing itself* [to pragma auto] becomes imminent. However, language is simultaneously the origin, the journey and destination of that place that, in its circularity and fragility, does not achieve it and only presupposes it in its interpretative and creative power. Language is “pre-sup-positional and objectifying” (Agamben, 1999a, p. 33). However, it is also betrayal, because “we presuppose, pass on, and thereby—according to the double sense of the word *traditio*—betray the thing itself in language, so that language may speak about something (kata tinou)” (Agamben, 1999a, p. 35). According to Agamben, this fragility or even weakness is forgiven in the written form by Aristotle, in the sense that the thing itself is suppressed from the theory of signification in which the *gramma*, the letter, is the way of presupposition and concludes:

Insofar as language bears within it the ontological structure of presupposition, thought can immediately become writing, without having to reckon with the thing itself and without betraying its own presupposition. [...] To restore the thing itself to its place in language and, at the same time, to restore the difficulty of writing, the place of writing in the poetic task of composition: this is the task of the coming philosophy. (Agamben, 1999a, p. 38)

If up to now, in a more or less negligent way, we also sometimes drift to the place of the critic, it was precisely to reach that point, that of aspiring to and profaning this task, made every time more distant by a school that makes us read and to write exactly in the opposite direction. Moreover, the example of writing is paradigmatic by what has been exposed, by the consequences at the level of thought and as an exercise of control and normalisation. If we are searching for the singularity of *whatever*, then we have to reverse the direction of expropriation of language we're subjected to, not as an intellectual or artistic ambition, but because this is the place of the human being and, because of that, it is here that equality resides and democratisation starts. Here is the new topography of what is possible in the contingency of the own language, the school space, in the characteristic dissent in art education, students, none other than them, can learn by themselves, their places and the creation of their worlds in language.

It is perhaps time to start unravelling this idea of maternal language that we propose, which never ceases to presuppose and to betray itself, from that which, coming out of itself, presupposes it in direction to itself and to language itself. Student and language become the thing itself, keeping the circularity that is inherent to it, amplifying and deforming that circle, creating the thing, creating worlds. Student and language presuppose and betray each other, they are thrown out of themselves

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in that process without losing sight of each another. The student looks inside and outside language, through language, the vision of language is in fact *from* and *in* language. Equal but singular, students with equal intelligence but made of singular and different substances. Lives that school devours, but which can be worked in their own residues. Fragments that resist and escape from the heritage of the masters' knowledge. And even the inert fragments spread in the humiliation of not knowing can be part of the revolt of those who want to learn by themselves. The circle is now that of life and death, the structure that has as much of the original as of the vanishing, the world that is born depends of the world that disappears, and the whole is fecundated in nothingness. The student finds herself on her feet, maybe not over truth, but over the sincerity of who is born, generates and dies: maternal sincerity. The enrolment in this circle is presupposed on the hypothesis that the student and the language become so indistinguishable in a form-of-life not only presupposed but put into practice. With this horizon the way never ceases to be from hypothesis to hypothesis. In this way, any language or *media* working from the student, even her own writing with its *gramma*, gets confused with the student that sets the confront between herself and the language. Student and language are the thing becoming itself, a swamp into which only the student herself can dive, a wonderful way where the forms of presumption are to come.

THE COMMUNITY AFTER THE RUINS

A year after the publication of *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*, Rancière resumes the fundamental concepts of school in the article *Ecole, production, égalité*:

C'est ici qu'intervient la forme-école. L'école n'est pas d'abord un lieu ou une fonction définis par une finalité sociale extérieure. Elle est d'abord une forme symbolique, une norme de séparation des espaces, des temps et des occupations sociales. École ne veut pas dire d'abord apprentissage mais loisir. La scholè grecque sépare deux usages du temps: l'usage de ceux auxquels l'astreinte du service et de la production ôte, par définition, le temps de faire autre chose; l'usage de ceux qui ont le temps, c'est-à-dire sont dispensés des contraintes du travail. Parmi ceux-ci, quelques-uns majorent encore cette disponibilité en sacrifiant autant que possible les privilèges et les devoirs de leur condition au pur plaisir d'apprendre. Si la scholè définit le mode de vie des égaux, ces «écoliers» de l'Académie ou du Lycée, du Portique ou du Jardin, sont les égaux par excellence (Rancière, 1988, p. 2). [This is the place where the school-form manifests itself. The school is not primarily a place or a function defined by a goal outside of itself. It is, primarily, a symbolic way, a norm of separation of spaces, times and social occupations. School does not mean, above all, learning, but leisure. The Greek term "scholè" separates two utilities of time: its use by those to whom the submission to service and to production prevents, by definition, the possibility that time is used for other

occupations; its use by those who have time, that is, those who are exempted from work duties. In the heart of these, we can find some that even increase this possibility, sacrificing, as much as possible, the privileges and duties of their roles for the pure pleasure of learning. If the “*scholè*” defines the way of life of the equals, these «students» from the Academy, High School, from the Portico or from the Garden, are their equivalents par excellence.]¹⁸

We are interested, precisely, in this place that is not defined by an outer social purpose, in this place of equals, in this equality that is the pleasure of learning. The ruins of school, whose foundations can be seen in Plato and Aristotle, are today occupied by the technique and excellence of cybernetic Fordism. We are not here trying to return to the origins, to restore a community, and much less crying for the past, but once more, we’re trying to understand the possibilities that could be enhanced by the disappearance of the *scholè* in the technological implosion. The fact is that the relationship has been reversed, there is a society that determines the purpose of school, relegating learning to a mere instruction that makes it possible for the cybernetic fordist machine to work. This movement is not new and has increased its power mainly with the industrial revolution and the foundation of the nation state. But it is the technological progress itself that makes the nation state lose its power to globalisation. School is more and more determined by cybernetic and supranational viewpoints, the technical language superimposes itself on the maternal language. What space do we have here for the pure pleasure of learning, for a maternal language, for a community of equals?

It is interesting that Bill Readings in *The Community of Dissensus*, the last chapter of his unfinished book *The University In Ruins*, examines, although with some hesitation, *The Coming Community* from Agamben. In his worries about the social bond, he recognises that in this disreferentialisation, the human subject is not the only point of reference. “The obligation is not to other humans but to the condition of things, *ta pragmata*” (Readings, 1999, p. 187) and he resorts to Aristotle to conclude that:

The social bond exceeds subjective consciousness. What we call language is not exhausted as an instrument of communication or representation. As a structure that is incapable of self-closure, language escapes instrumentality to mark the indifference of the state of things to subject. (Readings, 1999, p. 187)

The possibility of a community of singularities, of the community of whatever is based on this social bond that exceeds subjective consciousness and in the possibility that language is not only an instrument of communication or representation. In the ruins of school, we still feel the weight of the social relation linked to the state that is being dissolved, ironically, with the weight of the information and communication technology apparatuses in its disreferentialisation power. It is also in these ruins that we can imagine new languages and a new community. A community that is not determined by the crafts of large corporations, much less by the weight of the

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transcendence of the genius or artist. A community of equals, in which students and teachers share in their singularities the pleasure of learning. However, it is not sufficient to image it, we have to define the strategy for the profanation of apparatuses that prevent and to empower simultaneously.

THE SPECIFIC NATURE OF MODERN APPARATUSES

In the conference “What is an apparatus?”, Agamben says that the apparatus is:

[A]nything that has in some way the capacity to capture, orient, determine, intercept, model, control, or secure the gestures, behaviors, opinions, or discourses of living beings. Not only, therefore, prisons, madhouses, the panopticon, schools, confession, factories, disciplines, juridical measures, and so forth (whose connection with power is in a certain sense evident), but also the pen, writing, literature, philosophy, agriculture, cigarettes, navigation, computers, cellular telephones and-why not-language itself, which is perhaps the most ancient of apparatuses-one in which thousands and thousands of years ago a primate inadvertently let himself be captured, probably without realizing the consequences that he was about to face. (Agamben, 2009, p. 14)

When considering “anything” as a capture apparatus, Agamben is concerned about the dissemination of the processes of subjectification by the accumulation and proliferation of apparatuses in this extreme phase that is capitalism. He, moreover, distinguishes traditional from modern apparatuses, in that in these the “processes of subjectification and processes of desubjectification seem to become reciprocally indifferent, and so they do not give rise to the recomposition of a new subject, except in larval or, as it were, spectral form” (Agamben, 2009, p. 21). This is where we reencounter our problem and the only thing we wish to add to the schema defined by Agamben is, precisely, what we understand to dominate the politics of our time of cybernetic Fordism: McLuhanism. Aware of the methodological risk we run, we here intersect McLuhan’s theoretical plan to clarify the problem of modern apparatuses:

It is known that the fate of the “medium is the message” is the formula of our time, which results from the scenario built by McLuhan, where the media are extensions of the human body. What interests us in this work is the analysis he makes, using the Narcissus myth to explain the human fascination for their extensions in a material other than their own. For McLuhan, Narcissus does not consider the reflection he fell in love with as himself. And he justifies it with medical research by Selye and Jonas that our extensions are also self-amputations that sink us into a state of numbness (McLuhan, 1994, pp. 41–47). The problem of modern apparatuses, particularly digital media, is that the sacrifice – old technology of the self – was secularised in amputation with anaesthesia, so that the alleged “new self” is a prolongation and, simultaneously, an amputation of the “old self”. Without waiver or consent, merely without recognising each other, both merge in a cycle of eternal ripping. Anaesthesia is this numbness of a living being that can be

observed, without recognising, considering the fragmentation ordered in terms of zeros and ones, this is the new recomposition into the new material that makes up the new anthropological machine. This happens because the dissemination can be concentrated into a single object, which we designate as terminal. A terminal, among many, whose end is also the origin of this maximum apparatus that is the net with its huge accumulation of data on the human, in the universal language of the digital. This terminal allows various masks, but the biggest problem is that the supposed adjustability these masks depends on an amputation and consequent dislocation of the subject. It is an adjustability that is always maladjusted and hence the need to split at the atomic level to facilitate the adjustment. The adjustment is defined as a program, a set of instructions that tells us how we should be to fit the mask, or how we are for the mask to fit us. Only thus the machine functions, or we function in the machine, a detail that characterises the apparatus itself: Hyper-detailing. To atomise, because only thus is it universal; to detail, because only thus is it controlled; this is the apparatus's self-governance.

Apparently the Great Enquiry, which evolved from the Inquisition and in which the school, society, and life, were transformed (Foucault, 2009, pp. 225–228), which transformed the truth into a positive and desired self (Foucault, 2002, pp. 48–49), now transforms a human who is not, but should be; a human that when it turns into data (information) disarticulates completely with its negativity. This human-data is dual because it is not only an information, but gives itself to it – the thinking subject becomes the thought subject and culminates in the object. And it is this giving oneself to apparatuses made from us, but of a material that is not ours, that impedes us from recognising ourselves, that impedes an articulation between what one delivers with what remains, if it remains. This unrecognition of us is also what drives us to try to recognise ourselves. The separation is anaesthetised by so human desire to be complete outside of itself, in a machine that always finds one more task and an empty place in the detail of what it is made of and of what it wants to become. Each time that it searches itself and does not recognise itself, another vacuum is open to be filled with a new amputation. To double and redouble this detail that is always missing, were it not that the basic function of control and the root of the hyperreal. A function that coincides with our desire to find a possible detail about us (to control ourselves) or about the machine (to control us). And so, we obediently surrender ourselves so that the Great Machine can continue to function. The machine's operation demands the operating being that we offer to it and reciprocates the operation as the integrated spectacle (Debord, 1994) of the disintegrated spectator. Delicious feedback, comparable only to nature and that is perhaps why we contemplate it, there is something of ourselves that really circulates and “acts” between the living being and the apparatus, our animality. The spectacle of the scaffold (Foucault, 2009, pp. 32–69) has become eternal and interactive. This is the price of the mask being adjustable, of course, too expensive for a mask that will never serve and will only make us serve. To rotate this Great Machine, even if it falsely rotates around us, it is the duty of our schizophrenia, to be what we are

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not and simultaneously contemplate this non-being. Complete and contemplate this human-data became a having-to-be. We are already born with this debt, or guilt, of not being complete and that incompleteness was reduced in the shredding in order to complete what we behold.

THE ARTISTIC PROCESSES AS A STRATEGY OF PROFANATION

No wonder that digital media are an obstacle in school and in artistic processes. Its power of instruction reveals that the school governance paradigm has become obsolete. Governance can be performed by these terminals, apparently, without master and without institution, this is a real upgrade of the invisible hand. On the other hand, the subjectivity processes, so dear to artistic processes, have been compromised in these auto-amputations. So that the lessons with these apparatuses quickly slide into a bloodbath of subjects that will never be found. After all, the two groups of students, hostile or fascinated, are on the same side with an abyss between them and their amputations. Besides, the school is the laboratory and antechamber where one experiments and subsequently radiates the discarnation into which society is turned. It remains ironic that the *oikonomia* that turned word into flesh (Agamben, 2009, pp. 9–10), has been transformed, through science and the modern school, into an information apparatus that now defleashes language, expropriating each one of their vital abode, which is language.

However, it is precisely the school deactivation and the disjointed operability of these apparatuses that when denounced open a new space we can occupy. “What in fact is a poem – as Agamben says – if not a linguistic operation which renders language inoperative by de-activating its communicative and informative functions in order to open it to a new possible use?” (Agamben, 2008, p. 140), then the artistic processes can be directed towards the deactivation of these terminals that impede the forms-of-life and make all into forms-of-communication. We are not only referring to the interruption and deactivation of these apparatuses, we are also referring to occupying this void as the original space of the human being and as time of creation. In this sense, the gesture makes a movement in the opposite direction and through the artistic processes it approaches itself to the thought of art, in the words of Agamben: “in the work of art the continuum of linear time is broken, and man recovers, between past and future, his present space” (Agamben, 1999b, p. 102). This reencounter does not have to be transcendental, it can be simply the reencounter with its own self.

The strategy of profanation implies the recognition that language is presuppositional, that interruption and deactivation of these apparatuses also forces one to presuppose new uses and from hypothesis to hypothesis, from singularity to singularity, the place of whatever is inhabited.

The corrosivity¹⁹ between art and education, between artistic processes and operability is the conflict into which we can dive and seek new gestures and new uses for these apparatuses. This is the political task reserved for this generation, or perhaps not, and has always been the task of those who decided to devote themselves

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to the strange mystery of language. Once aware that language is inherited from the outside as if it were not our own and, in this sense it is always foreign, in the first conflict with this strangeness and respective rules, a move to the inside to seek ourselves and a supposed language truly ours is inevitable. Ernesto knows that learning is unavoidable and lives his life *en rachâchant*, Yusuf (or Kaplanoglu) places his life at stake, discovers his maternal language and becomes a poet (or filmmaker).

Maternal language, this is the mystery of one who studies oneself.

NOTES

- ¹ More than “unmasking fetishes or the endless demonstration of the omnipotence of the beast”, we are interested in investigating the power in the “capacity of anyone whatsoever” and in the collectivisation of this power in the scenarios of dissensus. The infinite nature of these “unreasonable hypotheses” is our eschatological principle (Rancière, 2009, p. 49).
- ² The eternal return and the will of power maybe “metaphysically mean the same thing” (Agamben, 1999b, p. 91) but, in these end times, we want to investigate the *power of whatever* in this “approximation of a world of becoming to a world of being” (Nietzsche, 1968, p. 330).
- ³ *Droit et Philosophie Panécastique*, the last book by Professor Jacotot, is devoted to Law and to his Panecastic Philosophy, from the Greek Pan [everything] and Ekastos [each]: Everything is in each thing, each thing is in everything (Jacotot, 1852, p. 168). The Philosopher Jacques Rancière revisits the work of Jacotot in his book *The Ignorant Schoolmaster* and devotes the last pages to the update of the infinite circle of this philosophy.
- ⁴ Teachers and students, they all study. Studying is present as the big watchword, the fundamental problem is the following: What is the direction of that study? Mere instruction for achieving goals, passing the examinations, or hypothetical future crafts. Or is it studying that which allows one to relate what one knows with what one does not know? Is studying that which allows to study and to study oneself for the sake of the pure enjoyment of learning?
- ⁵ Gnothi seauton [know yourself] is a Greek sentence coming from the Kentum world of languages and is a primordial situation according to Vilém Flusser: “it means to show the way, the direction, the method to all knowledge” (Flusser, 2012, pp. 90–91).
- ⁶ ABCs in English. We chose to use the Portuguese and French B, A, BA because this better expresses the production of a sound by the sum of two letters.
- ⁷ This is a stigma that I face very often, through my colleagues, some of them with the ‘bible’ of *The Emancipated Spectator* under their arm, apparently, ignoring the criticism of this stigma in the final part of the book.
- ⁸ Frame, shot, scene, sequence introduced by D. W. Griffith.
- ⁹ For more information about Conceição das Crioulas, Crioulas Vídeo and Identidades, I published the following works: Assis, T. (2011). Crioulas media: Technology, language and identity in a Quilombola community in Brazil. *Multiculturalism: Critical and Inter-Disciplinary Perspectives*, 149–155; Assis, T. (2012a). Introduction to the Human Terroir: Arts, authorship and technology as references for intercultural relationships. *Landscapes of (Un)Belonging*, 61–70; Assis, T. (2012b). Mugunzá: Politics, art/development: Savour but don’t swallow – Cook your own means to express yourself. *The International Journal of the Arts in Society*, 6(5), 1–7; Assis, T. (2016). Technology, language and identity from a Quilombola community in Brazil to the multicultural world. In A. Wagener & T. Rahimy (Eds.), *The need to belong* (pp. 165–185). Oxford: Inter-Disciplinary Press.
- ¹⁰ Along with this work, I developed another entitled *Lingua Estrangeira: Desenho estratégico sobre o paternalismo no ensino artístico* [Foreign Language: Strategic drawing about paternalism in art education], presented at “A Formação de Professores no Ensino das Artes Visuais em Discussão Pública” [Teacher Training in Visual Arts Education in Public Discussion], in which I explain the option to call Maternal Language and the dichotomy established with the Paternal Language. For this

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work, it is of interest to note that, as *mater* refers to mother, the derivation to *maternus* and *materinus* literally means “from the same substance as the mother” (Benveniste, 1983, p. 170). What is at stake is precisely a language from the same matter of the subject of its enunciation.

- ¹¹ I have worked on these two concepts, but they are perhaps not yet ripe. I start, mainly, from the work of Hal Foster in *Design and Crime*, that extends throughout his work, particularly in the critique to the spectacular architecture of Frank Ghery. I state this in an empirical way as a provocation of the international context of this publication. I am sure that across much of the West this visual culture phenomenon is reflected in arts education. I leave the discussion open regarding the problems that these concepts and this criticism raise in the Middle East.
- ¹² See Baudrillard (1994), pp. 12–14 and Marin (1984), chapter twelve, Utopic Degeneration: Disneyland, pp. 239–257.
- ¹³ Disney does not relate only to its iconic references, but to the exemplificative apparatus present in the big entertainment and communication corporations.
- ¹⁴ On the subject of education and the specificity of Disney, it is worth mentioning the work of *The Mouse That Roared: Disney and the End of Innocence*, from Henry Giroux and place it in the framework of cybenetic Fordism.
- ¹⁵ Some questions might be raised about non-proposal that are not much different from the ones raised by students, namely, those about restrictions that the proposal should or not have. My view varies according to the dimension of the class and, eventually, according to the grade and the cycle of studies. My intention is to forego any restriction, whenever it is possible, particularly in the first contacts with students. The context of digital media as a curricular unit and the dimension of the classes, has forced, most of the times, to restrictions regarding the media, e.g. printed media, video with time and specific dimensions, etc. Given the normal suffocation of many students that do not know where to start, there is always the possibility of thematizing the technique e.g. thematizing photography, its process, its history, its apparatus. Above all, any ‘tip’ has always been a pretext for a mirror, a heterotopy of the student, thinking himself in this hand-to-hand combat against the *media*. It is obvious that this principle is parallel to the socio-political discussion and its relation to Art. All this to confound technique, subject and student, so why do we need specific proposals?
- ¹⁶ Trapped proposals because they are unreasonable, because they are conflicts in a place that should be conflictual. Throwing them out, like a person throwing Molotov cocktails, gives us the possibility to open cracks in schooling and its proposals.
- ¹⁷ Cf. Agamben (1999b).
- ¹⁸ Free translation.
- ¹⁹ I borrow this term from Juuso Tervo’s dissertation (2014).

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