

IS RANCIÈRE ANARCHIST?

An Approach to Rancière's Political Thought

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	1
1. Rancière's Political Thinking	4
1.1 On Equality	4
1.2 On the Police, Politics and the Political	8
1.3 On the <i>demos</i>	10
1.4 On Emancipation	12
1.5 On Philosophers	15
2. Anarchism	24
2.1 What is Anarchism	24
2.2 On Authority	28
2.3 The History of Anarchism	36
2.4 On Violence	41
3. Is Rancière Anarchist?	45
3.1 Rancière and the Enlightenment	45
3.2 Rancière and Authority	47
3.2.1 Rancière and Moral Authority	47
3.2.2 Rancière and Political Authority	48
3.2.3 Rancière and Pedagogical Authority	55
3.3 Rancière and Anarchism by Todd May	57
3.4 Forms of Rancièrian Politics	60
Conclusions	63
Bibliography	66

INTRODUCTION

The present essay is an attempt to compare Jacques Rancière's political thinking with anarchism by aiming to reach a better understanding of the French author. Although I presented the principal question as "Is Rancière anarchist?", the answer cannot be given as a plain "yes" or "no". Therefore, the question has to be altered for the benefit of accuracy, bearing in mind that there will be some similarities and differences between Rancière and anarchism. A more proper question would be, therefore: "To what extent, or in which sense is Rancière anarchist?". The result of this paper is that they coincide depending on the issue at hand. Since anarchism is a vast, and sometimes contradictory ideology, Rancière will agree with a certain anarchist regarding a certain issue.

Both Rancière and anarchism are egalitarians in the sense that they both focus on equality. Egalitarianism is a very broad trend of thought that gathers different groups and perspectives within it. For instance, Rancière claims that equality is neither a value, nor a goal, but a presupposition, a point of departure. Anarchism, on the other hand, is very broad as well, and different anarchists comprehend equality in different ways, lacking any unified conception of it. However, as I conceive anarchism in this paper, it is characterised by its scepticism towards authority, putting the discussion on the table and without having any pre-determined conclusion beforehand. Although the conclusions are diverse depending on different anarchist authors, regarding the different kinds of authority, the claim for equality remains in the background.

What both anarchism and Rancière have in common, besides the importance of equality, is that they deal with empowerment. They both attempt to give voice to those who have none. This issue is precisely what makes them so interesting and appealing in times of crisis, like the economic crisis that most Western societies are suffering nowadays. Although anarchism is centuries old as an ideology, it is not an exaggeration to claim that it is as valid as the newest social criticism. Moreover, it has historically

been proved that its popularity increases in times of crisis, like in the Spanish Civil War, and the issue today is also taking on a new topicality.

Rancière, on the other hand, is a French philosopher whose Marxist beginnings ended by showing deep differences with both Marxism and his professor Louis Althusser. Besides his deep political thinking, which this essay attempts to analyse, Rancière is a thinker who offers a philosophical system. His main areas are politics and aesthetics, although he also presents original ideas regarding pedagogy. I call this a system because the ideas are so interrelated, that it is hard to limit an explanation to only one area of study. In the case of this paper, I work mainly on his political thought but also his pedagogy, although sometimes it is hard to limit where politics ends and where pedagogy starts.

The first chapter of this dissertation will trace Rancière's political thinking. Beginning with the concept of equality as the kernel of his theory; the lack of *arkhê* or lack of foundation for the ruler to rule will appear fundamental for the politics to happen. For Rancière understand and uses the words politics, police and the political in a different way, I will then attempt to explain them and their relationship with the concept of *le partage du sensible*. The subject of the political action, the *demos*, is a controversial issue, which I will attempt to explain. Besides, I will oppose my view to Todd May's on Rancière's *demos*. Next, the process of creating a new identity during the political moment, which Rancière calls subjectivation, will be analysed and its relevance for emancipation, explained. After that, Rancière's view on the political philosophers will be examined: Plato with *archipolitics*, Aristotle with *parapolitics*, Marx with *metapolitics*, and its current model "postdemocracy" or consensus democracy. At last, I make a comment about Rancière's writing style, trying to grasp the intention behind it, which I think is political.

The second chapter concentrates on anarchism. Starting with the controversies of its definition, I will define it regarding its attitude towards authority. Therefore, I will also explain what authority is and the different forms it takes. Next, I will mention some of the anarchist authors and the historical development of the anarchist ideology. At last,

I will examine the different kind of protest that anarchist may adopt to fight for their cause, as well as the debate that the use of violence rises among different anarchist authors.

The last chapter compares Rancière with anarchism, based on everything that has been explained in the two former chapters. I will start by highlighting their common origin by mentioning some characteristics of the Enlightenment that both Rancière and most of the anarchist fulfil, such as the idea of perfectibility and the key role reason plays in their theories. Then I will assess to what extent Rancière agrees with the anarchist characteristic, drawing upon what according to my view, his attitude towards the different kinds of authority described in the chapter two are. After that, a special mention will be made to Todd May, for his is the first if not the only one comparing Rancière with anarchism. I will approach his view critically explaining why I disagree with his analysis. Finally, a practical example of what *anarcho-rancièrian* politics would be will be presented, based on the group Anonymous.

1. RANCIÈRE'S POLITICAL THINKING

1.1 On Equality

The very core of Rancière's theory is equality and inequality, making it *the* major problem of the political philosophy¹. Equality is not a goal, nor a value, nor something that needs to be accomplished, but a presupposition, a departure point. Rancière made his Joseph Jacotot's statement that everybody can be equally intelligent². So, equality is used as a method to discover where equality leads us³. It is important to notice that Rancière does not claim that we *are* all equal, but that we *can be* equal and it is by showing there is equality there is politics.

As a French intellectual of the XXth century, it is not surprising that Rancière has a marxist background -it is well known that he published the book *Lire le capital* with his professor Louis Althusser. Although he has kept the "leftist" essence, he has dissociated himself from some of the marxist ideas and has shown very critical opinions towards some of the marxist theoreticians such as his ex-professor Althusser or the sociologist Bourdieu.

One of the main differences between Rancière's thought and Marxism -and consequently Hegelianism- is the role of history and the temporality of politics. Rancière rejects any configuration of politics in metaphysical terms. However, it would be a very big misunderstanding to presuppose that history plays no role in Rancière's thought, quite the opposite: the years that he spent in the archives collecting writings from XIX. century worker's, shows that history might have something to teach us,

¹ Kristin Ross, "Historicing Untimeliness" in *Jacques Rancière. History, Politics, Aesthetics*, ed. Gabriel Rockhill and Philip Watts, (Durham and London: Continuum, 2009), 17.

² Jacques Rancière, *The Ignorant Schoolmaster: Five lessons in Intellectual Emancipation*, trans. Kristin Ross (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991), 73.

³ Solange M. Guenoun, "Jacques Rancière's Ethical Turn and the Thinking of Discontents", in *Jacques Rancière*, 177.

especially broadening our field of perception, and reconfiguring what is plausible in terms of thinking. In this sense, history plays the same role as fiction in the French author's theory, and as we shall see later, history and *logos* get involved with myth and stories when founding the *arkhè* of the community. So, history has its importance, but it does not enjoy any higher status or especial place as in the Marxism. Time seems not to be lineal or dialectical any more; a certain period of time is not a unified voice or a unique way of thinking. Even though one period stands over the rest, this is a mixture of different ways of thinking and approaches that belong to different periods and live together.⁴

Rancière also denies, not only a teleology for the community -opposing himself to the Aristotelian philosophy- but also any essence of the community, clashing with the view that philosophical tradition has defended until very recently. As some of his French contemporaries, Rancière belongs to the theoretical position called post-foundational, the position that rejects any final ground of the social and sees the necessity of arguing about the need of it -differentiating them from the anti-foundationalist⁵. At this point, two main questions that constitute the kernel of his theory arise: the lack of foundational principle -*arkhè*- of a community and the criticism of the intellectual and political philosophers who have tried to find or justify that principle.

Concerning the first point Rancière, as other post-foundationalists, claims that the principle of governability is precisely based on the lack of any principle that justifies the power of the better over the worse, the wiser -or professor- over the ignorant, and the rich over the poor. Thus, the legitimisation for the ruler to rule over the others has no ground, no *arkhè*, no *beginning*. "Democracy is the specific situation in which it is the absence of entitlement that entitles one to exercise the *arkhè*. It is the commencement without commencement, a form of rule (*commendement*) that does not command. In this

⁴ "The temporality of politics is not progressive, nor dialectical -a word he uses rarely-, it is not continuous and it is not over. Politics is an event that cannot be predicted any more than its end can be apocalyptically announced. It is always circumstantial, local, and entirely contained in its singular manifestations." Ross, *Jacques Rancière*, 29.

⁵ Oliver Marchart, "The Second Return of the Political: Democracy and the Syllogism of Equality", in *Reading Rancière*, Ed. Paul Bowman and Richard Stamp (London: Continuum, 2011), 129.

logic the specificity of the *arkhè* (...) is destroyed”⁶. Note the play with the words *commencement* and *commandment*, the author is also explaining the two meanings that *arkhé* provides. On one hand it entails a sense of temporality, a beginning in time and the disposition of the ruler and the ruled to act in that way, which is proved by its empirical operation⁷. On the other hand *arkhé* refers precisely to the distribution of these roles, and therefore, the distribution of power. The very impossibility of the *arkhé*, he calls the *wrong*⁸.

Rancièrian democracy means to break with the “natural” order or hierarchy and to become aware of the fact that the distribution of roles in society are arbitrary⁹ and that power has neither foundation nor legitimacy. Rancière explains how Plato¹⁰ made a list of the titles that allowed people to govern in Athens, six of them referring to the government of the better, healthier, wiser. etc. Yet, the seventh title was the “favour of heaven and fortune”, meaning that it was the absence of any title, and making explicit the contingency of the ruler. This kind of government without title refers to a democratic government. However, democracy for Rancière, it is not a form of government, neither an institution. Democracy is a space where the political subjects can interrupt the “normal” order of the things. Democracy means *dissensus*; there is no democracy without disagreement. A democratic action is carried out by those who do not count; those who cannot be seen in the community and; those who have no name but *demos*.

The concept of the *demos* is very appealing because unlike the reference to the ancient Greece, Rancière’s *demos* is not a specific subject but any political subject. The *demos* is the surplus of the community, the one which does not count. The whole

⁶ Jacques Rancière, “Ten thesis on politics”, in *Dissensus. On Politics and Aesthetics*, trans. Steven Corcoran, (London: Continuum, 2010), 31.

⁷ Jacques Rancière, “Does Democracy Mean Something?”, in *Dissensus*, 51

⁸ Jacques Rancière, *Disagreement*, trans. Julie Rose, (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), 13.

⁹ Marchart defends contingency instead of arbitrariness. See “The Second Return of the Political”, 129-147.

¹⁰ Plato, *The laws*, Book III, 650c. in Jacques Rancière, *Hatred of Democracy*, trans. Steven Corcoran, (London: Verso, 2006), 39-40.

constitutes itself, instead of collecting existing parts¹¹. It is precisely bringing this surplus to our sphere of perception what doing politics is for Rancière. Therefore, democracy does not mean the government of the majority, the poorer or the lower class¹² but it refers to any democratic actor who, without having any qualification, claims the legitimation (as any other qualified person) to exercise power. So, it can be said that the void of the term makes it impossible to identify it with any definite group or subject, opening the possibility for anybody to become a political actor: “a community is political when it authorises forms of subjectivization for the uncounted, for those unaccounted for. This needn’t imply a visible category which identifies itself as “the excluded” and which wants to identify the community with itself.¹³” Besides, the lack of fixed identity of the *demos* allows it to be in a strategic position that is used in a certain moment to break the given order by the exercise of the power that, in principle, was not given to them.

The origin of the division of the parts in a community can be found in *le partage du sensible*¹⁴. Although this concept can be found in Foucault, Rancière provides it with another meaning: “the aspect of Foucault’s thinking that I have been able to turn into my own is that which first asks itself *how* such a thought is thinkable and *who* can think it.”¹⁵ What he is referring to is “to the most basic system of categorisation through which we perceive and intuitively classify the data provided to our senses.”¹⁶ In other words, *le partage de sensible* is the given order not in terms of rules but in terms of perception; what we acknowledge and ignore; what we hear as noise or speech, or what makes something possible to think about, i.e. from the belief that the king has a holly

¹¹ Jacques Rancière, “Politics and Aesthetics: an Interview”, *Angelaki: Journal of Theoretical Humanities*. 8:2, (August 2003):198, accessed June 12, 2012, doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/0969725032000162657>.

¹² Rancière, *Dissensus*, 53.

¹³ Rancière, “Politics and Aesthetics: an Interview”, *Angelaki: Journal of Theoretical Humanities* 198.

¹⁴ Different authors use different words such as “division”, “distribution” or “partition” to translate *partage*. In order to avoid highlighting some parts of the concept in detriment of others, I will use the original term *le partage du sensible*, making an especial emphasis on the fact that *partager* in French means to divide and to share.

¹⁵ Jacques Rancière, “Against and Ebbing Tide: An Interview with Jacques Rancière”, in *Reading Rancière*, 246.

¹⁶ Yves, Citton, “Political Agency and the Ambivalence of the Sensible” in *Jacques Rancière*, 120.

legitimation to the thought -and action- of his decapitation. *Le partage du sensible* is not something fixed, it is changeable and it is this fluctuation of perception and thinking reflected in speech what interests Rancière.

1.2 On the Police, Politics and the Political

Rancière calls the logic of distribution according to the qualifications, competences and places *the police* [*la police*]¹⁷. He again changed the meaning from that offered by Foucault who originally used the term, so that it refers not to the institutions of power who control bodies and life any more, but to *le partage de sensible*, insofar it becomes possible to define strategies and techniques of power¹⁸. It is important to notice that “police” is at the same time the community without a void and without surplus, where everything and everybody occupies the place it corresponds, and the practice of the government and the ruling of the institutions are practiced¹⁹. It is concerning this second meaning that Rancière denies that there are good and bad police, rather, there are some police orders that make the irruption of *politics* more plausible. Police is not a levelling mechanism; not all police orders are the same.

Politics [*la politique*], is what breaks the given order of the community, blurring its defined limits and identities. Because it operates with the logic of equality, it is necessarily opposed to the police, due to its hierarchy and specificity of its positions. Politics is what alters *le partage du sensible*, what makes the measurable community immeasurable and brings what was invisible to the sphere of visibility; makes the silence audible; the noise understandable; and plausible what it used to be unthinkable. Politics is the process that starts when the excluded show their equality by speaking.

¹⁷ Although it might seem so, the police order does not only mean what we commonly understand as politics but it leaves room for more content. The composition of this extra-content is open to debate. See Marchart, “The Second Return of the Political”, 129-147.

¹⁸ Jacques Rancière, “Biopolitics of Politics?” in *Dissensus*, 94.

¹⁹ Samuel Chambers, “The Thinking of Dissensus: The Politics of the Police: From Neoliberalism to Anarchism and Back to Democracy”, in *Reading Rancière*, 24, enumerated in four points the characteristics of the police but I think that they can be summed up in this main two points that are taken from Rancière himself in “Against an Ebbing Tide” in *Reading Rancière*, 249.

While politics works with equality, which is the sole universal axiom that it can have²⁰, police *wrongs* it: “instead of arguing that the police *denies* equality, I shall say that the police *wrongs* equality, and I shall take the political to be the place where the verification of equality is obliged to turn into the handling of a wrong”²¹. It is in the sense that police and politics are necessarily opposed because their logics are antagonistic, but not in a Manichean way; police being the bad and politics the good²². They do not even belong to different worlds or fields²³, due to the fact that politics has no proper place and always occurs within the police: “The police count is made on the basis of distinct spheres, but politics is a process, not a sphere”²⁴. To both logics meeting each other, Rancière calls *the political* [*le politique*].

So long as politics modifies the perception field, it can be said that it (politics) is always aesthetic because rather than the content, it is the form by which is carried out what matters, the form of equality. “Politics is aesthetics in principle”²⁵. They both break with the way we think and see and create new ways of dividing the sensible. According to Rancière, these two regimes have no proper ontology, they do not exist *per se* and they only exist through definite regimes of identification²⁶. Although the relationship between politics and aesthetics has been long discussed, it can be said that what they have in common is not only the ground for encounter between the political subjectivization and a police distribution, it is also the fact that they are a distribution and at the same time, a potential redistribution of the sensible²⁷. In that sense, education

²⁰ Rancière, “The Thinking of Dissensus: Politics and Aesthetics”, 4.

²¹ Jacques Rancière, “Politics, Identification and Subjectivization”, *October*, Vol. 61, The Identity in Question (Summer, 1992): 58-64.

²² Although May and Marchart think the opposite. See Chambers, “The Thinking of Dissensus”.

²³ May argues that the police and politics are not only two different logics but also two different worlds, the one of the domination and the one that presupposes equality. Thus, May reaches the wrong conclusion that the police should disappear. See Chambers, “The Thinking of Dissensus”.

²⁴ Jacques Rancière, “Who is the Subject of the Rights of Man?” in *Dissensus*, 70.

²⁵ Rancière, “Does Democracy Mean Something?”, 58.

²⁶ Jacques Rancière, “Afterword”, in *Jacques Rancière*, 283.

²⁷ Gabriel Rockhill, “The Politics of Aesthetics: Political History and the Hermeneutics of Art”, in *Jacques Rancière*, 202.

can also be understood as politics since “the distribution of knowledge is only socially efficacious to the extent that it is also a (re)distribution of position.”²⁸

1.3 On the *demos*

But, “Who is behind the *demos*?” one may ask again. How should we conceive that emergent subject? Is it a group that is already excluded and claims to have voice? Or is it a group that is created by the modification of the *partage du sensible*, a new group that is identified in the “we” or “the people” of the speech? What, at first sight, might seem a superfluous question, can have important consequences when we apply Rancière’s theory to real cases²⁹. May explains a case of a black community who organised themselves, after a white person killed a member of that community, running over him³⁰. According to May, the black community who raised its voice against the oppression of the institutions is an example of a *Rancièrian* political action carried out by a *demos*. May also mentions other examples of the *demos*, such as women and the zapatistas in Mexico. He knows this group exists in the police order, but not as political subject.

However, I have serious concerns about the understanding of the *demos* in this way. In my view, it is not the same to be invisible, to be forced to be invisible. Women, black and zapatistas do not have voice, not because they are not seen as a group that can be political, but because there are other people who do not want them to take part in politics (putting it in a simplistic way, men, white and rich). We have to take into account that, what is at stake is not only the raise of the oppressed, but also the modification of the *partage du sensible*. Can we alter the way we think and see, using the same names for the same groups as in the police? Maybe we can, although the identities would remain fixed and that hindered somehow the process of changing our way of thinking. Is it, then, a name that is already in the police, but that gathers different subjects within it? In that case, the queer movement would be an example of the

²⁸ Rancière, *Hatred of Democracy*, trans. Steven Corcoran (London: Verso, 2006), 68.

²⁹ I would like to thank Todd May for the interesting discussion we had by email about this topic.

³⁰ Todd May, “Rancière in South Carolina”, in *Jacques Rancière*, 105-119.

Rancièrian political action, for it blurs the boundaries of gender. So, the revolutionary act would not be when the group of women, in an act of demonstrating equality, say “We, the women”, but when the people from the gay-lesbian-transsexual movement say “We, the women”, meaning something different to the police order.

To express it in other words, what we are considering when discussing the *demos*, is what a political action is and is not, as Rancière understands it. As I have tried to show, this is a very problematic issue. Thus, I will attempt to clarify it a bit with the help of practical examples.

The protests and the mobilisations against the shortcuts in Southern-European countries have been numerous, but the one I would like to mention is the one that happened in Spain and is known as the movement of the “*indignados*” or indignants. The reason why I think it was a political action as Rancière understands it is based in two reasons: first, under the adjective “indignant” many and varied people gathered together to protest, but they were mainly academically very well prepared young people who are unemployed or with bad work conditions, without possibility of buying a house, and have a very uncertain future regarding pensions. They are the modern excluded, the ones that (surprisingly) do not count. The other significant group were the retired people who went, not only to give support to the younger generation, but also to defend their pensions, with which sometimes they can hardly meet the ends. Thus, calling them all “indignant” was, perhaps, a way of grasping the changed categories of reality, because who was the political subject in that case? It was the unemployed young, it was the middle-age woman who have been evicted, it was the elderly retired man who has difficulties paying the bills; they were all economically and politically excluded people, the ones who suffered the consequences not only of the crisis but the insensitivity of the politicians. And they took the “Plaza del Sol” square to show they had something to say about it, that they were equal to politicians in the discourse (*logos*). The other reason to take the protests as an example of *demos* is based in how the police reacted. Here the police refer to both uses of the word, but especially to the established order and institutions. People in charge of the establishment tried not to take into account what the citizens had to say. The official message was that they were just careless youngsters

worried about drugs and drinking, all they wanted was the disorder and that they had nothing to say about politics because they were not capable, all they made was noise (*phone*).

Rancière, in the beginning of his book *Dis-agreement*, mentions a distinction between *phone* and *logos*. *Phone* is the sound or noise that animals articulate when they are in pain; *logos* expresses the pain due to the injustice through human language, i.e. speech. This is the main difference between animals and humans according to Aristotle, and this is how each one sees her position according to Rancière: while the political subject claims that the protest is a reasonable disagreement, the police reacts saying that the noise they are making is just noise, there is no speech or message there, there is nothing that can be heard. “[Politics is] not a discussion between speaking people who would confront their interests and values. It is a conflict about who speaks and who does not speak, about what has to be heard as the voice of pain and what has to be heard as an argument of justice.”³¹

Therefore, when the police have to face a dissension from the official logic, it is expected that they call it “noise”. My suggestion here is that they sometimes even call it “terrorism”. From this, we are lead to the following question: can terrorism be political in a *Rancièrian* way? I will attempt to answer to this controversial question later, when I go through the Rancière’s idea of post-democracy and consensus.

1.4 On Emancipation

So we have the police, politics, and the political which are central concepts in Rancière’s political thought and are linked to the emancipation that happens through subjectivization. When politics occurs, it happens by challenging the given identities within the police. When the *demos* refers to the “we” -the political subject is always plural in Rancière’s thinking³²- that “we” is refusing its given place and role in the

³¹ Jacques Rancière, “The thinking of Dissensus: Politics and Aesthetics”, 2.

³² “*Les sans-parts* are always to be conjugated in the plural withing Rancière’s grammar: the stage is constituted only after they have managed to speak as a group”. Citton, “Political Agency and the Ambivalence of the Sensible”, 131.

police and it is creating a new identity. It is a new collective subject that reconfigures *le partage du sensible*. It can be said that, if the police is about *right* names, politics is about *wrong* names³³. Once again, although the concept was used by Foucault, Rancière's use of the term changes its meaning in a way that subjectivization means the emergence of political actors by people engaged in the activity itself, in opposition to Foucault's subjectivization that happens to the object of particular political processes³⁴. As Rancière himself explains, subjectivization is a process of "disidentification or declassification"³⁵ and its logic is the one of the heterology, what is the formation of a self in relation to another³⁶; it is a creation of a new area of experience.

Besides blurring identities, subjectivization also means combining different fields that are supposed to be separated. Politics means to mix the social with the political and Rancière insists that there is nothing more proper to politics than the interval between the identity and the no-identity. From this follows that he also denounces the arendtian division between the social and the political, and its echo in the call of some French politicians of the 80s to go back to politics³⁷. As an example, Rancière mentions Olympe de Gouges, the woman who wrote the "Declaration of the Rights of women and Citizen" as an example of blurring spheres between the social -private- and the political: "Woman has the right to go to the scaffold; she should equally have the right to go to the Assembly"³⁸. Here it the paradox of the women during the French Revolution is succinctly explained: if their heads could be cut for political reasons, they should also have the right to talk about issues of public interests, *they should have the right to be heard as people who can give political speeches*. But equality, as rights, is nor given neither claimed; it is practiced, it is verified³⁹. The struggle by cases of subjectivization

³³ Rancière, "Politics, Identification and Subjectivization", 61.

³⁴ May, "Rancière in South Carolina", 114-115.

³⁵ Rancière, "Politics, Identification and Subjectivization", p.61.

³⁶ Idem.

³⁷ Rancière, "The Thinking of Dissensus: Politics and Aesthetics", 3.

³⁸ Olympe de Gouges in "Article 10 of her Declaration of the Rights of Women and Citizen" in *Hatred of Democracy*, 301.

³⁹ Rancière, *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*, 71.

and the practice of equality that opposes the privatisation of the common life is called the democratic process in Rancière's theory⁴⁰. "Democracy, then, far from being the form of life of individuals dedicated to their private happiness, is the process of struggle against this privatisation, the process of enlarging the public sphere, i.e. fighting against the distribution of public and private that secures the double domination of the oligarchy in the state and the society."⁴¹ However, for Rancière, social movements do not necessarily have to be political, it depends on the modification of the sensible. In order to illustrate more what he means, he gives an example of a students protest in France in 1986, when the government tried to approve a legislation, which by means of "selective orientation" would guide students to develop their skill to match them with the economic requirement, and in this way, would decrease the unemployment rate among higher educates students. What Rancière highlights is not the fact that students protested against this law but the way they did it: "the students brought [the proposed legislation], read it and discussed it the students evaluated the law and pronounced it a bad law."⁴² Instead of organising riots or noisy protests against the law, the students, acted as if they were capable of judging politicians' work as good or bad. In doing this, the students proved their equality in pronouncing their reasons against the legislation, with the same capacity as those who made the law. The students showed that they had something to say about public affairs, rather than leaving it only on the hands of those who are officially recognised to make such decisions.

Rancière calls the action of standing against the police order and constructing a space that was not there before *emancipation*, by means of the proof of equality given simultaneously to oneself and to the others. Some authors have defended that Rancière has contributed to the ethics of recognition,⁴³ stating that Rancière has in common the Hegelian desire for recognition, which is based on the ontological equality of the master

⁴⁰ Rancière, *Hatred of Democracy*, 302-303.

⁴¹ *Ibid*, 299.

⁴² Jacques Rancière, *On the Shores of Politics*, trans. Liz Heron (London: Verso, 1995), 57.

⁴³ Jean-Philippe Deranty, "Jacques Rancière's Contribution to the Ethics of Recognition", *Political Theory*, 31:1 (Feb. 2003): 136-156. Although Deranty finds some similarities between Rancière and the philosophers of ethics, he also admits that it is the logic of the wrong what differentiates him from the others and, consequently, has a different approach to relations of domination and exploitation, 148.

and the servant⁴⁴. Although this ontological equality is the kernel of Rancière's theory, his way of understanding emancipation does not fall in the theory of recognition, due to the fact that it runs, not only in the direction of the other, but also in the direction of the self. Were the case the demonstration only for oneself, then it would be identity of politics, which entails the risk of becoming politics of self-centeredness⁴⁵. So, the two direction message that Rancière's conception of emancipation suggests gets rid off the two dangers that involve committing only to one of the directions.

For Rancière, democracy is the political articulation of emancipation⁴⁶. However, it has to be emphasised that, following Jacotot's thoughts on equal intelligence, only individuals from a community can emancipate, society can never be emancipated⁴⁷. There are two reasons for that: first, a community of equals can never become an "equal society" because society intrinsically implies an order and a hierarchy. Rancière draws a distinction between community and society: while the first can stand a principle based on equality, it is a contradiction to seek for an equal society. Taking into account the arbitrariness of society (its roles in the hierarchy), in-egalitarian logic of the social bonds is also compared to another arbitrary human construction, although egalitarian: the language. The second reason is that a collective subject can never be rational since only individuals are provided with reason. The mass cannot be reasonable; in contrast, emancipation is supposed to happen by intellectual means and, therefore, a society cannot be emancipated.

1.5 On Philosophers

Rancière is reluctant to label himself as political philosopher stems from the fact that all those intellectuals deny equality as the base of the community and see hierarchy, even intellectual, necessary not only to preserve the order but also to justify their role as intellectuals. They think that "the teaching situation rests on the absolute condition of

⁴⁴ Ibid, 143.

⁴⁵ May, "Rancière in South Carolina", 113.

⁴⁶ Ibid, 152.

⁴⁷ Rancière, *On the shores of politics*, 84.

*an inequality between a knowledge and a non-knowledge*⁴⁸, also defending that only people who *know* themselves, can change the situation. Consequently, Rancière clearly rejects the theoretical authority, that is, the intellectuals. What these intellectuals should not do, according to Rancière, is “speak for” the excluded, e.g. the workers, but what they should do is listen to people’s voice and help them being heard, without interpreting their words or discourses, without putting themselves above people.

Rancière also opposes the idea of a spontaneous authority, rejecting the idea that people cannot make any revolution without an intellectual leader; quite the contrary anyone can become a political actor and lead a democratic action. Rancière’s reluctance for the subject of speech to be in the first person singular, “I”, avoids, not only any leadership of the revolutionary moment, but also its perpetuation. As he states “[The guarantee of permanent democracy] is the continual renewal of the actors and of the forms of their actions, the ever-open possibility or the fresh emergence of this fleeting subject.”⁴⁹

Rancière presents a very interesting paradox about democracy, explaining that democracy has two enemies: the government without limits (i.e. tyranny, dictatorship and totalitarianism) and the democratic life, the excess of the individuals that it is opposed to the well-ordered government. So, the good democracy -and the only good one- is the one who will suppress this democratic life-style. Political philosophers have tried to eliminate politics through philosophy because that way they thought they were contributing to the to the unity of politics and the self of the community and, consequently, eliminating the difference between police and politics. He also calls this suppression the “archaic art of politics”⁵⁰, explaining that the person who tries to diminish the political through politics is the *Auctoritas*. Rancière claims that the grounds of the *Auctoritas* is *actor*, to which he opposes the intellectual. The difference

⁴⁸ Louis Althusser, “Problèmes étudiants”, in *La Nouvelle critique*, 152. (January 1964) in Kristin Ross, “Rancière and the Practice of Equality”, *Social Text*, 29 (1991): 57-71.

⁴⁹ Rancière, *On the shores of politics*, 61.

⁵⁰ *Ibid*, 9.

between these two is that the *auctor* uses the words in a way that augments the power of the collective being.

Although the fact Rancière never says explicitly if these philosophers are right or wrong might be a bit disrupting⁵¹, the content of his writings shows without doubts his opposition to the theories of the political philosophers who, being in essence *auctors* but appearing to be intellectuals, try to make the political (disagreement) disappear including it in the visible (police). He summarises the content of the discourse of the political philosophers in the following two points: “first, equality is not democracy, and second, justice is not management of wrong.”⁵² Rancière’s attempt is to show the opposite of these two utterances, i.e. that equality or the lack of foundation of the power is the very essence of democracy, and that justice is related to the process of subjectivization to handle the *wrong*, a wrong which means denying the presupposition of equality and dividing the *sensible* in a fixed, ordered way. There are three great figures of political philosophers with their respective regimes are Plato with *archipolitics*, Aristotle with *parapolitics* and Marx with *metapolitics*.

Plato, as opposed to the democratic life as he was, tried to build up a regime (*politeia*) that would avoid all the excess of the *demos* by including it in the instituted forms and the mechanisms that regulate it. The *politeia* is where the wiser command over the ignorant. The supreme sage, i.e. the philosopher, becomes king and rules justly and righteously after he discovered what the good, beautiful and just is. Besides the philosopher-king, *archipolitics* is where everybody has a certain place and a certain virtue (*sôfrosunê*) for that place, a regime where a void has no place by unifying *nomos* with *physis*, meaning that the law and the will of the community are combined together. In order for everybody have her place and be *fixed* in it, education plays a fundamental role. It is thanks to the education that citizens of the *politeia* learn to which level of the social hierarchy they belong to and why it is appropriate for them.

⁵¹ James Swenson, “Style Indirect Libre” in *Jacques Rancière*, 267.

⁵² Rancière, *Disagreement*, 62.

Rancière draws a distinctive line between democracy and republic. Basically, the republic is opposed to the democratic process of mixing the public with the private. According to the French thinker, sociology and republicanism play the same role and that is to “restore beyond the democratic rupture a political order that is homogeneous to the mode of life of a society”⁵³. A republic is about correlating the society and the state, the democratic excess with the institutions and laws. What Plato defended in his political theory, Rancière criticises in the contemporary France. According to him, the French republic (also called so for other reasons) tries to unify the democratic spirit with the institutions by education (like Plato suggested), which plays a very important role to achieve that goal.

Although Aristotle endeavours to eliminate politics with what Rancière calls *parapolitics*, he does not substitute *physis* by *nomos*, but the opposite: he overlaps them. He wants to create a regime that will be “the one that contained in itself a principle of regulating or moderating conflicts, an optimal combination of freedom and stability”⁵⁴. Not only that: this regime has to keep in balance the recognition of equality and the government of the best.

Marx, with his ideology, reveals the falsity, illusion or *simulacrum* of politics since the truth (and *the wrong*) are outside the realm of politics. Ideology has played an important role within marxism and its intellectuals such as the French sociologist Bourdieu, who Rancière criticises. Bourdieu presents the argument of ideology as a tautology that says that the proletariat “are where they are because they don’t know why they are where they are. And they don’t know why they are where they are because they are where they are.”⁵⁵ Rancière argues against this reasoning claiming that the place the proletariat -or the excluded, the ones that do not count- occupy is not related to their ignorance but to the expectations: they are expected to be in that place and fulfil their role instead of *taking part* where they have no part. That is why they are where they are and, as a consequence, what they do not need is an explanation from an intellectual

⁵³ Rancière, *Hatred of Democracy*, 64.

⁵⁴ Étienne Balibar, “What is Political Philosophy? Contextual Notes” in *Jacques Rancière*, 103.

⁵⁵ Rancière, “Afterword”, 275.

about their situation so that they can change it. What they need is to be seen or heard when they cross the boundary of that what delimitates their identity. This sheds light on Rancière's interest in the workers of the XIX. century, which he found in the archives. Those proletariat who were trying to describe their lives and their reality, did not only describe it, they also created it. Rancière takes their notes and, without interpreting them, helps them be understood as political actors by altering the category they belonged to. Their writings and speeches are examples of subjectivization that their contemporary marxist authors could not see.

As May summarises these are the three regimes and their different tactics to eradicate politics:

“*Archipolitics* allots unequal places for each in the name of the common good; *parapolitics* blunts the force of the assumption of equality by seeking to create an order that requires compromising it; *metapolitics* abandons the field of political struggle for equality altogether in the name of a non-political element. But they converge on the point of ensuring that the part that has no part continues to have no part”⁵⁶.

Although Rancière criticises political philosophy, he admits a mission to philosophy, stating that its most confidential duty might be to deal with fear and hate that are shown in forms of racism and xenophobia. The French author claims that the cause of these problems stem from the failure of emancipation as intersubjectivity and from consensus that denies and erases the void within society. He also calls the consensus in democracy “postdemocracy”. If we understand that, it follows, according to Rancière, that there cannot be democracy without disagreement, and consensus is precisely what does not allow that disagreement, what avoids any conflict. The plurality of different voices are converted into a sole voice, there is no place for the invisible to be seen since everything is seen, everybody is included, even the excluded. The danger

⁵⁶ Todd May, *The Political Thought of Jacques Rancière: Creating Equality*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008), 45-46.

of eliminating the dispute about *the wrong* and the miscount of people, is the inacceptance of and, in the last term, the criminalisation of everybody who presents the relationship between the things in the world and their names in another way. The sole consideration of an alternative relationship, meaning another understanding of the *common*, might be very hardly punished by those ruling. “Consensus, before becoming the reasonable virtue of individuals and groups who agree to discuss their problems and build up their interests, is a determined regime of the perceptible, a particular mode of visibility of right and *arkhé* of the community.”⁵⁷ What differentiates consensus from the former regimes mentioned above, is that consensus follows economic interests, and places everybody in the society according to its economic role, as well as the management of the fear and insecurity as we shall see later.

Oddly enough, another contemporary philosopher uses the same word, consensus, as a requirement for his normative discussion. This philosopher is Habermas and his theory is called “Discourse Ethics”. According to him, if we establish rational conditions to a dialogue, the result of that communicative act, will not only be rational, but also universally moral. Consensus is the condition for dialogue, which means that the participants are taking part in it voluntarily and it is an agreement free of coercion. Besides their dissimilarity regarding the starting point for a dialogue (consensus for Habermas; equality for Rancière), there are more differences between the two authors: first, while Habermas’ participants recognise each other as such, in Rancière’s theory it is this recognition from one part what is at stake. “Against Habermas’ idealised view, which takes the possibility of dialogue and understanding for granted at the transcendental level”⁵⁸, Rancière insists that, at this very level, the object of dialogue is nothing but the very possibility of dialogue, since some of the partners are not recognised as valid speakers by the others. The other distinction is that in Rancière’s theory, the performer does not necessarily say “I” and “you”, like it should according to Habermas, but also “they” or “the workers”. Besides the political subject being always plural, as we have mentioned earlier, it is not necessarily in the first person, but it can

⁵⁷ Rancière, *Disagreement*, 107.

⁵⁸ Deranty, “Jacques Rancière’s Contribution to Ethics of Recognition”, in *Political Theory*, 151

also be in the third to create a new political subject, even if it is referring to “the people”.

Contrary to how Rancière understands democracy, this is nowadays identified with a legitimate state. With identifying the law with the spirit of the community⁵⁹, this state just eliminates the *wrong*. The French author also refuses elections as democratic actions because everything is agreed and fixed, it is unanimous in its essence. However, in the *rancièrian* democracy, i.e. the political process of subjectivization by those who are not entitled to rule, democracy itself is at stake and equality is the disagreement about equality⁶⁰. By avoiding any space for dissensus, democracy is eradicated by those who claim to defend it⁶¹.

Now, I would like to go back to the question that I raised before: can terrorism be a political act in the way Rancière understands it? First of all, we will have to define what terrorism means. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, terrorism is “the unofficial or unauthorised use of violence and intimidation in the pursuit of political aims”⁶². I would also like to emphasise that it is usually the state and the official discourse that labels somebody terrorist, or in the case that it is a group, a terrorist group. It is the police who attempts to persuade people, not only to ignore the possible political message, but also who tries to fill them with fear. This way Rancière refers to the marginal parties that in 2002 in the French presidential elections, when he realised that the central role of the debate was the management of insecurity and how marginal parties exploit it, following the logic of the consensus: “On one hand, these parties foment feelings of insecurity, which the state then turns to its own advantage. On the other, the consensual state paints these marginal parties themselves as an additional form of insecurity. Consequently, these marginal parties end up working against themselves, helping to promote today’s sacred “democratic” unions of consensual government, who are thus handed the means to push through their policies of social

⁵⁹ Rancière, *Disagreement*, 108.

⁶⁰ Rancière, “Afterword”, 282.

⁶¹ Rancière, *Hatred of Democracy*, 82.

⁶² <http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/terrorism?q=terrorism>

consensus -that is, of the soft liquidation of the forms of protection and social solidarity- which tomorrow will hand them the means to manage the consensus of fear”⁶³.

One of the problems for the reader when dealing with Rancière’s texts is the confusion that his use of the terms might cause. One might ask oneself: if he is giving them another meaning, if he uses them in a way that words such as “democracy” are not alike our common use, why he does not use other words or create new ones in order to avoid all the possible misunderstandings and confusion? What is obvious is that Rancière is doing this on purpose, there is no possibility here to be accidental; his thorough writing does not let room for the chance to play any role⁶⁴. Why then, does he do so? Rancière uses these homonym words, not to defend their original meaning and stand for purity as some philosophers do, but to take advantage of their homonymy by thinking about the intervals that it creates as a way of altering the partition of the sensible: “the other way considers that every homonymy arranges a space of thought and of action, and that the problem is therefore neither to eliminate the prestige of the homonymy, nor to take names back to a radical indetermination, but to deploy the intervals which put the homonymy at work.”⁶⁵ He breaks with the paradigmatic meaning of the concept and goes beyond them, making writing -and reading- a political

⁶³ Jacques Rancière, “War as Supreme Form of Plutocratic Consensus”, in *Dissensus*, 107.

⁶⁴ Rockhill asks the same question and he takes two possibilities into account; that it might be possible that the concepts do not have any importance; but then he defends the other possibility, which is according to him, the positive connotation that these words imply the reason why Rancière uses them: “*Democracy* has largely become a signal -to use Barthe’s term- used to indicate what is morally condoned by the author using the word. In Rancière’s own case thi is quite obvious, because he actually has no need for the term *democracy* in his conceptual arsenal. In fac, if this word does anything, it introduces unnecessary confusion. Since it is more or less an exact synonym for politics (*la politique*) understood as subjectivization (*la subjectivation*), it is questionable whether it plays any analytic role whatsoever. One might assume, following common sense, that Rancière uses it to pinpoint the specificity of democratic developments, particularly withing the modern world. However, such commonsense assumptions would be misguided because Rancière goes to great lengths to show that his own personal definition of democracy is extremely far from -and often incompatible with- the common understanding of democracy. Why, then, does he insist on using a term that has little or no analytic purchase and which, on the contrary, only seems to introduce confusion? The answer is to be found in the widespread valorization of democracy in the contemporary world: he wants to imbue his own stance on politics with the positive and progressive connotations attached to the term *democracy*. In other words, he uses the word less as a *denotative signifier* to indicate a distinct signified (he already has *politics* and *subjectivization* at his disposal) than as a *connotative signifier* that indirectly signals the positive, progressive value of his own political discourse.” Rockhill, “The Politics of Aesthetics: Political History and the Hermeneutics of Art” in *Jacques Rancière*, 205. I want to argue that Rancière’s reasons are much deeper than acquiring the positive connotations of the words and that his writing style is coherent with what he is claiming and defending.

⁶⁵ Jacques Rancière, “The Use of Distinctions”, in *Dissensus*, 218.

act: “In my terms, writing -and its other side, reading- is a redistribution of the sensible. Writing frees words from a given relation between signs and bodies”⁶⁶. So the politics he claims starts from his texts, from the way they are written that invites to broaden the perception horizon of thoughts and at the same time avoiding any dogmatic interpretation of his texts. There lays his undeniable talent⁶⁷.

⁶⁶ J. Rancière, Afterword, *JR History, Politics, Aesthetics*, p.278.

⁶⁷ “I suppose my idea of research is indissociable from the invention of a way of writing”. *Politics and Aesthetics: an Interview (JR)*, p.209.

2. ANARCHISM

2.1 What is Anarchism?

Anarchism is a problematic ideology in many ways: it is problematic in definition (there are different opinions about what anarchism is); it is problematic in its canon (there are some authors known as “classical”, but the exclusion/inclusion of some is controversial); it is problematic in schools of thought (there are so many different of them, some intertwined with socialism, others with liberalism and a lot among them that it blurs the boundaries). Consequently, anarchism is a problematic topic to approach, but that question has not been an obstacle for philosophers and/or activists to get interested in it.

Anarchism has been largely discussed since its bases were founded; nevertheless, a lot of false myths and misconceptions have survived giving place to many prejudices. Therefore, before focusing in what anarchism is, it is necessary to clarify what is not. This prejudices can be classified in four groups: the classical, the contemporary, the Marxist, and the academic.

The classical prejudice relates anarchism with violence such as bombs and killing people, this prejudice comes from politicians. Although this nihilistic approach is not completely mistaken in the sense that the destructive or negative part plays an prominent role within anarchism -and especially for some anarchists-, anarchism also an attempt to build a new and better society. Destruction is seen -by some anarchists- as a necessary means before restarting building a society again. Against the popular belief, anarchists do not defend chaos and reject any order, but what they reject is this stablished order: the current institutions, the hierarchical order of the society and its authority what they put into question. They also try to offer alternatives and say how a fair society should be -and attempt to put it in practice, that is one anarchist characteristic.

The contemporary prejudice links anarchism only with culture and no longer with politics. Pop anarchism and anarcho-punk movements were created in England in the 1970s, with their respective appearance -leather jackets, tattoos, piercings, etc. Although it is exceedingly common to create an “uniform” according to a movement - such as group identity and thus identify the “we” and the “others”- there is a danger of forgetting the ideas of the movement and just wear the outlook for the sake of it, becoming part of the consumerism culture. So, it is quite common to see in some cities people with punk look described here and who are addressed by people -and authorities -as anarchists in a pejorative way. What I want to clarify about this prejudice is that, it is not the appearance and, according to that, how society calls someone what makes her anarchist. It is essentially her political commitment, her attempt to change the bases of the society radically what characterises an anarchist.

According to the marxist prejudice, anarchists reject all types of power and authority. However, there are some kinds of authority that anarchists usually accept-although bonded to empirical verification- such as parental authority. As we will discuss later, anarchists are not in essence anti- authoritarian, but this position comes after long considerations. Regarding their attitude towards power, anarchists accept power as a source for movement or change -like in revolutionary moments. What they mainly reject is power understood as domination.

The last prejudice, the academic one, states that anarchists are only interested in praxis and have little interest in theory since the world does not change by writing books. Although action is a significant part of anarchism, it is also true that action and theory are not exclusive options, and that, as most anarchists admit, both are required to achieve their goal.

What is anarchism, then? The answer, far from being agreed upon, is rather controversial due to the fact that different authors explain it in different ways. McLaughlin, in *Anarchism and Authority: A Philosophical Introduction to Classical Anarchism*, classifies these different definitions in three groups: etymological, anti-statist and anti- authoritarian, adding that neither of these definitions is sufficient.

The etymological definition takes literally the meaning of the word an (no) arkhé (rule), claiming the absence of any ruler. In spite of the veridical explanation of the origins of the word anarchist, the word “no-ruler” is clearly far from being able to explain the complexity of the concept itself. The etymology, although true, is not enough to understand all the characteristics and implications of the concept.

According to the anti- authoritarian definition, there is no legitimate authority and, therefore, any form of it should be abolished. However, this has to be seen as a conclusion rather than a principle according to McLaughlin, claiming that it is the anarchist sceptic attitude what promotes such reflexion. This scepticism towards authority and, consequently, towards the state is the “essence” of anarchism and thus, we can understand how the third definition of anti-statism is not sufficient to define anarchism. According to the anti-statism definition, a society without state or government is not only possible, but also desirable. What this definition does not take into account is that the state, differentiating it from the government, claims and exercises political authority, and it is as a political authority that the state put into question, not just for the sake of being a state. Anarchists’ aim to discuss the legitimacy of the authority of the state and, in case they do not find any ground for it, to claim its illegitimacy and the consequent actions.

The definition of anarchism I am going to follow is the one McLaughlin presents. What makes it appealing is that, without having anything fixed a priori, this definition enables further discussions about the legitimacy of authority. In this way, the main characteristic of anarchism is not its clear position against authority or the state, but its scepticism regarding their legitimacy. As McLaughlin puts it: “the basic philosophical procedure of anarchism is to question or raise doubt about the bases of all authority and to challenge those forms of authority that it sees as illegitimate.”⁶⁸ Anarchists, a priori, are not anti- authoritarian -they usually accept parental authority- and do not seek to find the basis of legitimacy: if there is none, so be it. Anarchism puts the bases for a

⁶⁸ Paul McLaughlin, *Anarchism and Authority: A Philosophical Introduction to Classical Anarchism*, (Aldershot: Ashgate 2007), 30.

process based on the questioning of what seems illegitimate authority without taking for granted what the conclusions will be.

For a better understanding of anarchism, I am going to compare it with another two schools of thought: Marxist socialism and liberalism. The three of them are the children of the Enlightenment and the French Revolution insofar the three seek liberty and equality, but they do so in different proportion. Therefore, this difference in proportion is what separates them into different schools of thought. Liberals claim that the most fundamental value is liberty -understanding private property as a right- and they fight against the restrictions for that freedom. Marxist socialists claim that possession should be shared according to the needs of the population; consequently, the society should be based on equality. Anarchism has certain issues in common with both, but its most distinctive feature is the sceptic attitude mentioned before, and that it takes nothing for granted. In the following paragraphs, I am going to analyze the similarities and differences between anarchism and the other two ideologies.

Marxism, with its historical materialism, seeks to be a scientific approach to reality, it seeks to explain and predict the fall of capitalism by the raise of the proletariat. When that happens, and the proletariat take control of the state, they do accept and approve the proletarian state, consequently the state collapses because it is no longer needed. Anarchism differs from marxism in several points such as first, it does not aim to be scientific, but is a moral position. The inner morality of anarchism stems from its necessity to fight injustice -in the form of domination and exploitation- and say how the world should be, or at least how it should not be. Although anarchism might share this fight with marxism, the approach and way are different. While marxism is a doctrine, meaning that the foundations cannot be challenged, anarchism keeps challenging, questioning and putting in doubt its foundations as well as those of the society. Unlike marxism, the anarchist method for criticising the society is not based in the inevitability of the historical materialism -history is not determined, but we make it with our actions -and, what is more, it supports the idea of the reality being too complex to be explained based only in one factor -economy, God, sexuality, etc.-. Anarchist

authors think that we need different factors to explain all the human relations and that just one factor -even authority- is not enough.

The second main difference between anarchism and marxism is the disagreement concerning the state. Bakunin and Marx personified this discrepancy when they first warned about the risk of the proletarian government becoming oppressive. According to Bakunin, the state has its own machinery and does not extinguish itself but keeps working for its sake, no matter who is in power. He called the risk of the workers dominant state “the red bureaucracy”.

Another difference between these two ideologies is regarding the priority between domination and exploitation. Whereas, for marxists the second is prior in the sense that solving first economic problems would solve political problems, for the anarchists domination should be abolish before exploitation. Nevertheless, in order to explain that thoroughly, I have to go back to authority and explicate that it is a form of domination, as well as describe in which way domination and exploitation differ.

2.2 On Authority

Authority is a form of domination, which means that authority is a form of power. What differences this kind of power from the rest is that it consists only in human power. Here, we have to take into account that when we talk about power, it is in a “classical” way or pre-Foucaultian, meaning that power is understood as the ability to provoke change⁶⁹. Authority is also a relational term, referring to the fact that it affects social relations: “Authority is vested in rulers or governors; it is acknowledged by

⁶⁹ To understand Foucault’s influential understanding of power, I bring here his own definition: “Power must be understood in the first instance as the multiplicity of force relations immanent in the sphere in which they operate and which constitute their own organization: as the process which, through ceaseless struggle and confrontations, transforms, strengthens, or even reverses them; as the support which these force relations find in one another, thus forming a chain or a system, or on the contrary, the disjunctions and contradictions which isolate them from one another; and lastly, as the strategies in which they take effect, whose general design or institutional crystallization is embodied in the state apparatus, in the formulation of the law, in the various social hegemonies.(...) Power is everywhere not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere.” Michel Foucault, *History of Sexuality. Volume I: An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978 the original in 1976), 92-93.

subjects or citizens; it is directed toward definite values or goals.”⁷⁰ Therefore, authority can also be understood as “a form of social power.”⁷¹ All types of domination and exploitation are forms of social powers, but in different ways: while domination is the ability of a party to use control over another party, exploitation is more related to economy, meaning the profit that a party makes at the expenses of the other and with the effort of this last one.

The main difference with liberalism is that, while liberals argue about the limits of the state (personal freedom, freedom of speech, etc.), anarchism questions the very foundations of the state. Some liberals seek for the least possible participation of the state, especially in economic affairs. Although liberals are not anti-statist, there is a school of thought within anarchism which is quite close to them, called libertarianism. Note that “libertarian” for centuries meant (social) anarchist but “much more recently the word has been appropriated by various American free-market philosophers -David Friedman, Robert Nozick, Murray Rothbard and Robert Paul Wolff.”⁷² What differentiates an author like Murray Rothbard from the liberals and makes him anarchist is that he claims the elimination of the state in favour of personal freedom in a free-market.

What anarchism and marxism might have in common and in conflict with liberalism, is that they have been misunderstood as utopias. Anarchist authors have an ambivalent relationship with the utopia. On one hand, there are the benefits that utopias can bring to anarchism in imagining an alternative to the current society. As Kropotkin defended, utopias might help revolutionaries clarifying goals and the means for that. On the other hand, anarchists claim that their action is focused in the real society and their alternatives are viable. A reason for why they have been seen as social dreamers can be found in the broadly popular supposition that anarchists have an idealistic view of human nature. As Kinna states:

⁷⁰ Iredell Jenkins, *Authority: Its Nature and Locus* in *Authority: A Philosophical Analysis*, ed. Bein Harris (Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 1976), 36.

⁷¹ McLaughlin, *Anarchism and Authority*, 46.

⁷² Colin Ward, *Anarchism: A very short Introduction*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 62.

“Critics often claim that anarchists have an overly optimistic view of human nature. Yet Tolstoy’s and Perlma’s critiques of authority do not suggest that individuals are naturally “good”. They argue that the state has made us artificially “bad”. What is the difference? From this perspective the problem of the state is not that it creates social conflicts between peoples who otherwise live harmoniously, but that it habitually relies on violence to resolve differences between individuals who might otherwise rely on reason”.⁷³

There is a further reason why anarchists reject the idea of the utopia as a goal, due to the fact that it would be in opposition with another of their principles: the idea of perfectibility⁷⁴. In the way that utopia means the perfection, the end of the way, the absence of any need to improve, perfectibility, on the other hand, is the ability to improve not only itself, but the society as well; a process that remains opened and does not stop growing, contrary to the utopia.

Although liberty is the principle value for liberalism, this does not mean that it is not crucial for the anarchists. Actually, for some anarchists the definition of anarchism is its commitment to liberty. The difference between liberalism and anarchism is that, while liberals ask about the limits of the state, anarchists ask about the legitimacy of the state. Thus, anarchists may arrive to the conclusion of rejecting the state and the laws, as a consequence of their deliberation; extreme-liberals might get to the point to leave the state with hardly any power, but they will never reject the law.

Going back to authority and recalling that it is a form of domination, what makes domination become authority? While party A dominates party B, it is necessary that party B recognises party A as authority. In this recognition, there are two features: B acknowledges party A as providing binding and content-independent reasons⁷⁵. It means

⁷³ Ruth Kina, *Anarchism. Beginners' Guide*. (Oxford: Oneworld, 2005), 73.

⁷⁴ Perfectibility is arguably an essentialist idea. Consequently, Stirnerian and post-anarchist do not approve it since both are anti-essentialist.

⁷⁵ McLaughlin, *Anarchism and Authority*, 54.

that it is an order to be fulfilled and that the important thing is who said it (party A, the one with the authority) and not what said -there is no room for considerations whether the argument is reasonable and whether to accomplished it or not. The binding characteristic means that party B has a duty to follow what party A said. Authority is *“the right of A to issue directives and the correlative duty of B to follow them.”*⁷⁶

Most of the authors agree in stating that there are different forms of authority. They especially agree in identifying it to be “in authority” and “an authority”. However, I will use McLaughlin’s classification⁷⁷ for being the most clear one. I will explain the different kinds of authority and the reaction of different anarchist authors towards them. According to McLaughlin, authority can be classified in practical authority, theoretical authority and moral authority.

Moral authorities claim to know the Truth and, therefore, to have full acknowledgement of what the right conduct and how to accomplish a good life. Although the religious contexts are the most clear examples, it can also be a nonreligious authority like in the totalitarian political regimes. Their directives are directly practical, but it is also a matter of faith, people have to be believe in it. Consequently, the most serious crime you can commit according to this type of authority is disbelief. Because their authority cannot be founded in reason, the lack of faith dismantles their foundation, their Truth and their righteousness. On these grounds anarchists reject moral authority, because of its lack of rational justification and absence of convincing arguments: “it is illegitimate: not inconceivable, but without moral foundation.”⁷⁸

The theoretical Authority, also known as “epistemic” authority, is someone who is “an authority” in a field or area of knowledge. In this case, the authority is exercised over the ignorant (without ignorance there is no such kind of authority). The reactions of the anarchists are varied and complex. For instance, Stirner rejects theoretical

⁷⁶ Idem. (in italics in the original text)

⁷⁷ Ibid, 61.

⁷⁸ Ibid, 62.

authority on the grounds that the thoughts that are “given to me” are submissive and “alien”. According to McLaughlin⁷⁹, Bakunin and Godwin recognise the wisdom of the wiser men and even appreciate their contribution, but they do not accept the obligation of their reasons. Both, as most of the anarchists, make a distinction between authority and “advice”. Godwin considered fruitful mutual communication and understood the interaction as a way of consulting, but never as binding. Bakunin gives support to the reasons of educated men without accepting knowledge as an authority: “I listen to [experts] freely and with all the respect merited by their intelligence, their character, their knowledge, reserving always my incontestable right of criticism and censure”⁸⁰. However, there are two exceptions in theoretical authority, resulting that they can be legitimate: the authority from the parents and teachers. In both cases, it is assumed that it is best for the child to obey what they say, not only because they have a broader experience or knowledge in life, but also because parents and teachers try to keep children’s interests.

The third form in the classification is the practical authority or the “one in authority”, related with conduct or action. McLaughlin suggests many sources for this authority: knowledge or competence, God, nature, necessity, tradition, personality, human beings, position, psychological factors, and so on, leaving the issue of their legitimacy only to the topic of political authority. Within the practical authority, there are many types of authorities but McLaughlin mentions the following ones as the ones that can be justified: parental, political, operative, pedagogical, spontaneous and economic.

What differentiates parental authority from adult authority and makes it justifiable, is that a natural benevolence from the parents to the child to protect her is presupposed, but also meaning that this benevolence has to be verified empirically. So, neither do anarchists assume that all parents are good, nor do they justify paternalism

⁷⁹ Ibid, 66.

⁸⁰ Michael Bakunin., *God, and the State*, ed. Paul Avrich (New York: Dover, 1970), 32-33. in McLaughlin, *Anarchism and Authority*, 66.

(authoritarian parental authority). On this ground, anarchists (or most of them) accept parental authority as a legitimate one.

Pedagogical authority is related to the teacher-student hierarchical relationship where the first is supposed to pass on her knowledge by giving lectures. However, the educational system arouse suspicion among anarchists and non-anarchists in the sense that “the teacher’s role in discipline and punishment serves to shape obedient and uncritical members of society (law-abiding and patriotic citizens) and churches (the faithful) -in other words, adapted people.”⁸¹

The anarchist influence on education might have been larger than in other areas of life.⁸² Arguably, the most famous creator of an anarchist school is Francisco Ferrer, which he called “International League for Children’s Rational Education” (*Liga Internacional para la Educación Racional de la Infancia*). Ferrer presented a pedagogical model that challenged the contemporary education (where passive students are prepared for the job market) for an education for emancipation (where active students are treated as an end in themselves). That meant that children enjoyed more freedom in the classrooms regarding the program to follow, and to commit themselves to the activities they found more interesting, without imposition regarding what children were supposed to do⁸³. Ferrer based his anarchist school in the ideas of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Leo Tolstoy, Herbert Spencer, and Peter Kropotkin, among others⁸⁴.

Godwin, being coherent with his political thinking, and against any national school, believed that education should help encourage students to be active, rather than passive listeners: “It is our wisdom to incite men to act for themselves, not to retain them in a state of perpetual pupillage.”⁸⁵ He was also very reluctant to trust the teacher and

⁸¹ Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, trans. Myra Bergman Ramos (Harmondsworth, 1996), 57 in McLaughlin, *Anarchism and Authority*, 69-70.

⁸² Ward, *Anarchism*, 61.

⁸³ Kirwin R. Shaffer, “Freedom Teaching: Anarchism and Education in Early Republican Cuba, 1898-1925”, *The Americas*, 60:2 (October 2003), 163-164.

⁸⁴ *Ibid*, 161.

⁸⁵ Godwin, *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice*, in Ward, *Anarchism*, 53.

profesors that work for the state, because “the project of a national education ought uniformly to be discouraged on account of its obvious alliance with national government (...) Government will not fail to employ [the machinery] to strengthen its hand and perpetuate its institution.”⁸⁶

Making a summary of the features of the anarchist pedagogy, Armaline describes what he finds the main three characteristics: “an approach to truth and knowledge production that is humble in nature, the creation of spaces for the deconstruction of oppressive systems, practices, and ideologies in favor of horizontal ones, and an understanding of everyone as capable of curiosity, learning, teaching and creation.”⁸⁷ This characteristics especially highlight the active participation of the student and the absence of authority of the teacher.

Spontaneous authority arises in the case of an emergency such as an accident or a revolution. This kind of authority usually embodies a leader whose orders are followed by the people -recall that to be an authority, in necessarily implies obedience to the orders. This can be a acceptable criterion to distinguish real leaders from those “wanting to be leaders”, who have no ability to give any binding reasons.

Concerning the economic authority -superiority based on property- anarchists reject that private property is a natural right but the consequence of the state and the law. It is worth mentioning Proudhon’s words highlighting the contradiction of the economic authority being a natural right: “If property is a natural, absolute, imprescriptible, and inalienable right, why, in all ages, has there been so much preoccupation with its origin? For this is one of its distinguishing characteristics. The origin of a natural right: Good God, whoever inquired into the origin of the rights of

⁸⁶ Idem.

⁸⁷ W. Armaline, “Thoughts On Anarchist Pedagogy and Epistemology”, *Contemporary Anarchist Studies: An Introductory Anthology of Anarchy in the Academy*, ed R. Amster, A. DeLeon, L. Fernandez, A. Nocella and D. Shannon (New York: Routledge, 2009), 130 in Farhang Rouhani, “Practice What You Teach: Feilitating Anarchism In and Out of the Classroom, *Antipode*, 44: 5 (2012), 1728.

liberty, security, and equality?”⁸⁸ Although some of the parts of the economic authority are not linked to political authority, most of it is.

Perhaps, the most interesting type of authority for anarchists is the political one. A state is “a distinct social power that claims, exercises, and is widely recognised as ultimate (though, given constitutional restraints, not absolute) authority within a territory”⁸⁹ and “has, or claims to have, an exclusive right to perform acts of violence” (or to legislate them, as in the case of individual self-defence, the actions of private security firms and so on)⁹⁰. The state violence has been especially discussed and some authors have affirmed that violence is the [...] real essence of the state, developing it in two ways: the internal (by police) and the external (by wars).

How does the state impose duties on the citizens? Sometimes, the use of violence is obvious to achieve the goal, but most of the times it is through authority. According to McLaughlin, among the characteristics of the authority of the state, there are two contentious characteristics that make it permanent and involuntary⁹¹. Permanent means that the states endures from the moment the citizen is born to the moment of death, i.e. “the state is always there”. Involuntary means that nobody asked the citizen if she wanted to be part of it, if she wanted to be a citizen: “the state is there either you want it or not”. But this could be taken even further, as McLaughlin asks: “Who chooses the authority of the state as such?”⁹² and the answer is no one.

What is the anarchists attitude towards the state? It can be summarised in one word: hostility. As Miller⁹³ puts it: “Anarchists make two charges against the state - they claim that it has no right to exist, and they also claim that it brings a whole series

⁸⁸ Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, in *What is Property?*, 43, ed. Donalds R. Kelley and Bonie G. Smith (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), in McLaughlin, *Anarchism and Authority*, 71.

⁸⁹ McLaughlin, *Anarchism and Authority*, 75.

⁹⁰ Idem, (in italics in the original text).

⁹¹ Ibid, 77.

⁹² Ibid, 78.

⁹³ David Miller, *Anarchism* (London: Dent, 1984), 5, in McLaughlin, *Anarchism and Authority*, 78-79.

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of social evils in its train.” As it has been mentioned at the beginning, anarchists do not necessarily think of the natural benevolence of the human being, but that the state is the responsible of most of the vices and other negative aspects. Besides, anarchists reject the arguments given (twenty according to McLaughlin’s classification) to justify the legitimacy of the authority of the state, claiming that the state has no moral grounds for his existence (and doubting whether the state can ever be reasonably justified).

2.3 The History of Anarchism

We have already seen some of the controversial issues concerning the definition of anarchism. Now I would like to draw the attention to the discussion about the canon of anarchist authors and works. Paul Eltzbacher wrote in 1900 a list of anarchist authors that has been taken as a reference, although rarely as definitive. Those authors are Pierre-Joseph Proudhon (1809-1865), William Godwin (1756-1836), Max Stirner (1806-1856), Michael Bakunin (1814-1870), Peter Kropotkin (1842-1921), Benjamin Tucker (1854-1939) and Leo Tolstoy (1828-1910)⁹⁴.

However, the main controversial issue when trying to make an unified or agreed list stems from the definition of the anarchism itself. Some thinkers see anarchism as an ideology of a society without government. Therefore, anarchism can be identified, not only in all the Western history, but also in other cultures. “Armed with a broad conception of anarchism as a belief in the possibility of society without government, anarchists from Kropotkin to Herbert Read have pointed to everything from ancient Chinese philosophy, Zoroastrianism, and early Christian thought as sources of anarchism. The father of Taoism, Lao Tzu, the sixteenth-century essayist Etienne de la Boetie, the French encyclopaedist Denis Diderot, the American Transcendentalist David Henry Thoreau, Fyodor Dostoyevsky and Oscar Wilde, and political leaders like Mohandas Gandhi have all be included in anthologies or histories of anarchism”⁹⁵.

⁹⁴ Kinna, *Anarchism*, 12.

⁹⁵ Ibid, 14-15.

Here, it has to be noted that none of the names recall woman. Has there not been any woman who has contributed to the anarchist ideology? Kinna defends the opposite, and she even numerates some women who have given significant support to anarchism⁹⁶. Those women are Emma Goldman (1869-1940), Louise Michel (1830-1905), Lucy Parsons (1853-1942), Charlotte Wilson (1854-1944) and Voltairine de Cleyre (1866-1912). Arguably, Kinna states that their small repercussion can only be explained by the disdain with they have been treated.

The approach to different schools within anarchism is very problematic and even sometimes chaotic. So my method to cover that area will be based in two sections: in the first section, I will go through the historical foundation of anarchism and its evolution in time (based on McLaughlin⁹⁷); and in the second section, I will analyse one of the two main points of conflict among various anarchists: the revolutionary methods, especially their concern for violence (based on Kinna⁹⁸).⁹⁹

McLaughlin, who includes most of Eltzbacher's names in his list (and some more), analyses three texts as the foundational texts of anarchism. These texts are William Godwin's *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice*, Pierre-Joseph Proudhon's *What is Property?* and Max Stirner's *The Ego and Its Own*.

In 1793, Godwin wrote his *Enquiry*, influenced by the new air that the French Revolution spread around Europe. Departing from his utilitarian principles, Godwin arrived to the conclusion of rejecting the government. He found two reasons for that: the first is that government is unjust; the second argument is about reason or private judgment: "the intervention of authority in a field proper to reasoning and

⁹⁶ Ibid, 15.

⁹⁷ *Anarchism and Authority*, 117-162.

⁹⁸ *Anarchism*, 158-206.

⁹⁹ I will leave the issue of the economic organisation aside due to many factors: something about it is going to be implied when analysing the authors and schools in time and regarding violence, and for not being fundamental in my thesis, I do not see the need of investigating it further.

demonstration is always injurious”¹⁰⁰. According to Godwin, anarchism would happen gradually by cultivating reason “the great instrument of justice”¹⁰¹, not by a violent revolution, and in this progress, the path to follow would be the absence of political authority, the absence of legal coercion, and the absence of economic inequality.

Although Godwin wrote the first text with anarchist principles and conclusions, he did not refer to himself as an anarchist. Proudhon was the first to call himself anarchist (until then to be labelled as anarchist was seen negatively), and was not against the government or political order itself, but against the state or the legitimacy of its authority. As the title of his book shows, he centred his attention in property, because “[t]he central principle of bourgeois civilisation is in fact property, since both modern inequality and the modern governmental principle are founded upon it (...) “Is the *authority* of man over a man just?” and “Is political and civil *inequality just*?” -can only be settled by asking a third, fundamental question: “Is *property just*?” Thus, Proudhon’s critique of bourgeois-proprietarian civilisation is ethical in character, a critique from the ethical standpoint of justice”¹⁰². Nevertheless, what is just cannot be said in advance, since it comes after a “rational process of critical inquiry”¹⁰³.

Concerning Max Stirner, I am not going to explain his book here, due to his complexity and obscurity. I would just mention that he built the bases for individual anarchism.

Bakunin and Kropotkin are two authors who developed anarchism theoretically. In the case of Bakunin, he also committed himself to praxis. He explained the anarchist philosophy and the critique of authority in three principle points: in terms of its generally irrational foundations (religious and metaphysical); in terms of its relation to science; and in terms of its relation to socialism. Regarding authority and science, as we

¹⁰⁰ Godwin, *An Enquiry Concerning Political Justice and Its Influence on General Virtue and Happiness*, 1st edn (2 vols, London: Robinson, 1793), 128, 186 in McLaughlin, *Anarchism and Authority*, 124.

¹⁰¹ Godwin, *An Enquiry*, 887 in McLaughlin, *Anarchism and Authority*, 132.

¹⁰² McLaughlin, *Anarchism and Authority*, 134 (in italics in the original text).

¹⁰³ Idem.

saw before, Bakunin was not against theoretical authority, in fact, he thought it was justifiable, but also claimed that theoretical authority could never justify political authority. However, concerning political authority, his position was “the lesser of two evils”, since he preferred limited government to unlimited government, although both are illegitimate and, therefore, undesirable. Regarding the issue of authority and socialism, Bakunin dealt with the relationship between the “authoritarian” socialism or state and social freedom. “Bakunin denied that the (hypothetical) achievement of social equality could ever vindicate such social oppression, any more than the (hypothetical) achievement of individual freedom could ever vindicate social inequality¹⁰⁴”. Therefore, “the Bakuninian vision of justice -of the inseparability of liberty and equality -is absolutely irreconcilable with the classical liberal attachment to freedom *in itself*.”¹⁰⁵

According to McLaughlin, one of the biggest contributions of Bakunin to anarchism was that he realised it was not necessary to follow his own philosophy of “the lesser or two evils” in ideology but just the opposite, adding the positive aspects of liberalism and socialism to anarchism: “he incorporated key aspects of both traditions as well -he understood both the exploitative dimension of liberalism and the oppressive dimension of socialism, and was unwilling to justify either in the name of the other.”¹⁰⁶

When it comes to classifying social anarchism (what is not individual anarchism), there are two main models: first, Anarcho-communism: small scale, with localised cooperation; and second, anarcho-syndicalism: large scale, centralised production.

The founder of the anarcho-communism was Kropotkin, who tried to link anarchism to the science of evolution that irrupted in his generation by the hand of Darwin. However, the theory Kropotkin suggested, was not based in competition like Darwin’s, but in cooperation. McLaughlin suggests that Kropotkin’s science was socialist for the denial of competitiveness in social and natural evolution¹⁰⁷.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid, 137.

¹⁰⁵ Idem.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid, 138.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid, 158.

The anarchist thought which reached the gulf between Kropotkin's orthodoxy and the new philosophy came from hands of an Italian anarchist, Errico Malatesta. With this step, he "wishes to set aside the philosophical quest for "foundations" and to concentrate on "pragmatic matters""¹⁰⁸, also calling for more action in the society instead of just contemplating it¹⁰⁹. McLaughlin makes two critiques to Malatesta's contribution: first, "[t]he suspension of philosophical judgment recommended by Malatesta leaves anarchism open to the charge of being theoretically incoherent". Anarchism becomes in an ideology without focusing in theory any longer, and so the internal self consistency of the discourse is endangered, and second "[t]he prioritisation of transformative action over critical reflection suggests that anarchism is an anti-intellectualistic form of activist purism". We have already seen this impression in the prejudices, when we refused the idea that anarchism is pure pragmatism, and it does not endorse any philosophy or theory.

McLaughlin includes Emma Goldman in his list and explains that she linked anarchism with radical feminism, creating anarcho-feminism. Because she was a witness of the consequences of the Bolshevik revolution in Russia, Goldman was very critical towards "the tyranny of the crowd over the individual"¹¹⁰. Her major goal was to achieve the sovereignty of the individual by changing our values radically and oppressive social relations¹¹¹.

The most important contemporary anarchist is Noam Chomsky, although he his contribution to anarchist theory is not large¹¹². Perhaps, the reason for that lies on his lack of interest in developing "a general theory of anarchism"¹¹³, although he has made some contributions regarding social control by means of mass media, especially media

¹⁰⁸ Ibid, 160.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid, 161.

¹¹⁰ Ibid, 162.

¹¹¹ Idem.

¹¹² Ibid, 163.

¹¹³ Idem.

propaganda. “Chomsky developed a “Propaganda Model” with Edward Herman in response to what he regards as a fundamental social problem of our time. He calls this “Orwell’s Problem”: the problem of how we possess such limited (social) knowledge given such rich evidence (or information)”¹¹⁴.

Regarding the next anarchist, Bookchin, McLaughlin refers to him as neo-classical¹¹⁵, because like the classical anarchists, he attempts to develop an anarchist philosophy. However, Bookchin introduces a new dimension that was unknown for the nineteenth century anarchists: ecology. He investigates the origin of the anthropocentric beliefs and instrumental practices: “[Bookchin] argues that it is inconceivable that the notion of nature’s domination by mankind could have predated the domination of human by fellow human. Thus, the ecological crisis has its ultimate origin in social oppression (and its ultimate solution in social transformation)”¹¹⁶.

Contemporary in time with Bookchin, but considerably far in thought are the post-modern anarchists or “postanarchists”. Unlike Bookchin who fits his anarchist theory within then tradition of the Enlightenment, postanarchists like May and Newman, refuse the idea of a human nature. “May and Newman respect anarchism’s insights into the ubiquity and diffusion of power -its awareness that social power is not limited to the state (as liberalism implies) or capitalism (as socialism implies), and that critique and change must be social, not merely political or economic. However, they deny that an anarchist ethic -or a faith in rational progress -can be rooted in human nature, as the classical anarchists believed; thus, anarchism must be “environmentalised”, “contextualized”, or “relativized”¹¹⁷.

2.4 On Violence

¹¹⁴ Ibid, 168.

¹¹⁵ Ibid, 164.

¹¹⁶ Idem.

¹¹⁷ Ibid, 167.

There was and still is a lot of controversy going on about the kind and the amount of force to be used, in order to achieve anarchist goals. Kinna classifies the force in three categories and the opinion of each philosopher¹¹⁸. Those authors who saw violence as unnecessary or unjustified are Proudhon, Tolstoy, Woodcock, Clark, and Ward. In Proudhon's case, for instance, he did believe in a pacific revolution that would triumph over the confusion of the state control by dint of free contract and the principle of association¹¹⁹.

Among the revolutionaries that thought revolution (but not a pacifist one like Proudhon) was likely or necessary we can find Bakunin, Kropotkin, Malatesta, Reclus, Makhno, Goldman, Richards, Bookchin, and Zerzan. According to Kinna, Bakunin was the anarchist who gave the most idealistic treatment to the revolution, as can be seen in the way he described the revolutionaries with "blood in their veins, brains in their heads, energy in their hearts"¹²⁰, and being "*spontaneous, uncompromising, passionate, anarchic and destructive*"¹²¹. In opposition to Proudhon, Malatesta stood for a destructive revolution as he wrote "[w]e are revolutionaries because we believe that only the revolution, the violent revolution, can solve the social question"¹²².

These authors' admiration for revolutionary action, specifically propaganda by the deed, is described in Kinna's book as one of the revolutionary strategies. Another strategy, also supported by Bakunin, is the general strike strategy. According to the Russian anarchists, the general strike is a way to teach the proletarian masses the origin of their oppression, but in a way of learning theory through experience: "*emancipation through practical action*"¹²³. However, this strategy is not without dangers: "it collapses either into reformism or into armed struggle"¹²⁴. Another revolutionary strategy is the

¹¹⁸ Kinna, *Anarchism*, 201.

¹¹⁹ Ibid, 169.

¹²⁰ Ibid, 168.

¹²¹ Idem, (in italics in the original text).

¹²² Errico Malatesta, *Life and Ideas*, 154, in Kinna, *Anarchism*, 168.

¹²³ Kinna, *Anarchism*, 172 (in italics in the original text).

¹²⁴ Idem.

guerrilla warfare such as the Zapatista movement in Chiapas, Mexico. However, it rises many doubts whether the guerrilla strategy is totally anarchist, since the leader tends to obtain some authority (like the subcomandante Marcos).

When the hope for change by means of an action is small, instead of revolution Kinna calls it protest¹²⁵. However, it offers many benefits, such as to mobilise the people against authority and make them aware of its repressive nature. It also enriches the anarchists movement by providing it with different ways of acting. The forms of protest that are mentioned by Kinna are constitutional action (using the laws to protest, like accusing a company of exploitation, for example); symbolic action (it clusters from action focusing from building solidarity to more aggressive and violent actions); direct action (defined by its characteristics: without intermediary and directed to succeed, not just gain publicity); and civil disobedience, which I am going to explain a bit more. Although civil disobedience is similar to direct action, the essential characteristics are that it is always a non-violent action and that the repression of that action is part of their strategy. It is a popular form of protest among anarchist and non-anarchist. The activists that are usually associated to civil disobedience are Thoreau, Tolstoy, Ghandi and Martin Luther King, the first accepting the use of violence, and the other three rejecting it. Their followers believe that anarcho-pacifism is the tool to overthrow the state, though the discussion between them and the ones who believe in the effectiveness of violent action has not been resolved.

In the last category of the violence, terrorism, there are authors who justified it such as Reclus, Malatesta, Richards, and Zerzan, while others like Kropotkin, Tolstoy, Goldman, Bookchin, Clark, Woodcock, and Ward thought it was immoral or ineffective. Kinna explains that, for anarchists, justifying terrorism is more complicated than explaining it. Following the discussion about the Black Bloc, Kinna concludes that the critics for their destruction of private property are moral and pragmatic¹²⁶. According to the moral criticism, “[t]heir desire to commit violence is an indication of their urge to

¹²⁵ Ibid, 186.

¹²⁶ Kinna, *Anarchism*, 201.

dominate and oppress”¹²⁷. The pragmatic side has three parts: the first claims the superficiality of the participants throwing cocktail Molotov's and being more worried about the violence for the sake of it, rather than useful revolutionary tactics; the second claims that violence feeds repression; and the third is related to the benefit that authorities can make from exploiting the commitment to violence (usually claiming to be the victims). Anarchist responses to these criticisms can be resumed as violence being necessary, and that it has a purpose, especially in the anarchist transformation. In regards to the explanation, the main argument is concerning the good intentions of the individuals committing violence. However, Kinna claims that the kernel of this explanation is an idea of responsibility and private judgement¹²⁸ and that taking responsibility is not the same as committing to violence. She ends up saying “however, if violence is considered to be purposeful - as activists in the Black Bloc contend -the responsibility suggests that the question anarchists should ask themselves is not whether they should be prepared to use aggression against the state or civilisation, but how and when they should do so”¹²⁹.

¹²⁷ Idem.

¹²⁸ Ibid, 206.

¹²⁹ Idem.

3. IS RANCIÈRE ANARCHIST?

3.1 Rancière and the Enlightenment

The first similarity between Rancière and anarchism that I am going to analyse is their origin in the Enlightenment. As we already have mentioned, anarchism is based in the principles and ideas of the Enlightenment, and so are Rancière's. One of the most influential ideas of the Enlightenment was the concept of *perfectibility*. Perfectibility implies natural capacity for the human being to improve, not only himself, but also his environment through a process of learning. Perfectibility includes the cultivation of language and reason. This idea of the evolution or improvement is fundamental both for anarchists and for Rancière as we will see below.

Regarding reason, people of the Enlightenment, saw it as an universal and equal capability, despite different cultures, feelings and religions. This reason, that can bring the autonomy and/or freedom to the individual, is at least a reason *in potentia*, and that is why education plays a very important role in its development. Although I am going to talk more about the similarities between the anarchist pedagogy and the kind of school that Rancière suggests later, I would like to emphasise the role that reason -or intellect as Rancière calls it- plays in their theories. It is not my intention to go through all the anarchist authors we have seen in the second chapter , but I will mention the most relevant ones.

Among anarchists who have given great importance to reason, Godwin probably would be the first in the ranking. According to him, the cultivation of reason is essential, since it is “the great instrument of justice”¹³⁰. He also calls reason “private judgment”, and it is by this instrument that the individual is will reach the conclusion that any type of authority is unjust, because it interferes with the private judgment. If the person

¹³⁰ Godwin, *An Enquiry* , 887 in McLaughlin, *Anarchism and Authority*.132.

reaches her conclusions by her own means, nobody should impose any other thoughts on her.

In Rancière's case, the idea of perfectibility is translated to the idea of emancipation. It is true that for Rancière, education is not necessary for emancipation (it can happen by the creation of a new identity, as in the process of subjectivization), but it does play an important role as he explains throughout his book *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*. Both perfectibility and emancipation are pointing to the potential of the individual, what is not but can be. They are both achieved by the individual free from any imposition and they also imply a sense of improvement, either concerning oneself or the surrounding, which in Rancière's case, is related to the achievement of dignity: "[Jacotot's] own problem was that of *emancipation*: that every common person might conceive his human dignity, take the measure of his intellectual capacity and decide how to use it."¹³¹

Regarding Rancière's intellect is universal in the sense that "we all can be equally intelligent". He is suggesting a presupposition to see where it leads: "Our problem isn't proving that all intelligence is equal. It's seeing what can be done under that presupposition. And for this, it's enough for us that the opinion be possible -that is, that no opposing truth be proved"¹³². It is by showing this equality in reason that emancipation occurs. Emancipation happens by proving one's equality, not only in language or discourse, but also in the arena where political decisions are taken. I will go deeper into the dis-similarities between the ways of showing equality in the *ranciérian* way and the forms of protest that anarchists use. But for now, I would like to highlight that both authors claim the autonomy of the human reason and criticise any imposition over it.

Before starting with the topic of authority, I would like to examine this question: if both Rancière and anarchism com from the same tradition (the Enlightenment), do they share the goals? The answer depends on which author or school of anarchism we

¹³¹ Rancière, *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*, 16.

¹³² Rancière, *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*, 46.

take into account. If we take anti-statism as the anarchist goal, I would say that Rancière does not share their goal. Rancière does not mention anything against the state or the governmental institutions, not even against what he calls the *police*. What he reinforces is the power of the people that is always in tension with those institutions. From this, it follows that Rancière might have in common with anarchism the will to improve society, although without leading to a final state of justice¹³³. This might suppose the end of any similarity between Rancière and anarchism. However, in order to avoid jumping to the conclusions too soon, the problem has to be thoroughly examined.

3.2 Rancière and Authority

The topic of authority is a big issue. As we saw, although for anarchism can be defined as anti-authoritarianism, the definition I preferred was the one of scepticism about authority. Oddly enough, Rancière shows all the evidence of being anti-authoritarian. I am going to examine his attitude towards different forms of authority described in the second chapter.

3.2.1 **Rancière and Moral Authority**

It is not clear what Rancière thinks about moral authority. He mentions the pastoral government¹³⁴ referring to the opposition between the religious hierarchy and the equality of democracy: “Democratic crime has its origin, then, in the primitive scene that consists in forgetting the pastor”¹³⁵. Thus, it seems that Rancière does not support the christian hierarchy and refuses the equality they claim, as can be seen in *On the Shores of Politics*: “The glossary of the Rule of Saint Benedict is exemplary in this regard, for it notes but two uses of the adjectives *aequalis* -the first to evoke the equality of the charity dispensed by an abbot to each of those who are entrusted to his care, and the second to emphasise the equality of the duty of obedience (*servitutis militium*)

¹³³ May, *The Political Thought of Jacques Rancière*, .99.

¹³⁴ Rancière, *Hatred of Democracy*, 30.

¹³⁵ Idem.

incumbent upon all monks”¹³⁶. The reason for criticising the equality Christians predicate is because, in the end, “[w]hat they did offer, strictly speaking, was either a community of masters or a community of slaves”¹³⁷. However, it has to be noted that Rancière is not criticising Christian moral authority, but its equality, which is not the same.

Rancière’s attack on Christian moral authority can be understood from the following sentence: “An attack on the law of kinship is above all an attack on the sheep’s bond to its father and divine shepherd”¹³⁸. If we understand that when he mentions “kinship” he is referring to the political hierarchy, to the ruler and the right to rule, then we can make the inference that Rancière rejects moral authority so far (and in this way) it is related to the political authority. “Instead of ‘the Voice toward Moses’ we are governed by a ‘dead-man-god’. Though it is only capable of governing by making itself into the guarantor of “pretty pleasures”, capitalising on our great distress as orphans condemned to wander in the empire of the void, meaning equally the reign of democracy, of the individual, or of consumption”¹³⁹.

3.2.2 Rancière and Political Authority

Regarding Rancière’s conception of political authority, there is much evidence to show that Rancière is anti-authoritarian in the political sense, but paradoxically, he is not anti-statist. Rancière does not mention anything against the state or the governmental institutions, not even against what he calls the *police*. Police is neither good nor bad; police is the way we classify the world and society by assigning people the already known identities, as well as the institutions that govern. Politics is what has an effect in both and alters them. Rancière is drawing attention to that moment when the power of the people challenges the institutions, but never with the purpose of eliminating the latter. The process is more similar to the assimilation: in the beginning

¹³⁶ Rancière, *On the Shores of Politics*, 71-72.

¹³⁷ Ibid, 72-73.

¹³⁸ Rancière, *Hatred of Democracy*, 31.

¹³⁹ Idem.

the new identity that is created changes, not only the forms of perceiving, but also the way to classify the groups within a society. However, after a while, the new *partage du sensible* transforms into police and the given order, until a new political event, changes it. The hope is that this assimilation will be towards an improvement. According to Rancière, the police will never disappear, or at least he does not attempt to negate it.

Saying that, Rancière leaves no space for any justification for the ruler to rule. He even mentions Plato and his paradoxical seventh title, the one he coins “the anarchist title, the title specific to those who have no more title for governing than they have for being governed”¹⁴⁰. While most anarchists seem to leave the possibility for a rational justification of the state open (although, according to McLaughlin, anarchists might suspect that there is no room for that possibility), Rancière strongly denies any legitimacy and he calls to the attempt to legitimate it *wrong*. Thus, Rancière would agree with those “suspicious” anarchists about the lack of foundation of any political authority. Rancière stated explicitly in an interview that “at a fundamental philosophical level my position can be called anarchist *stricto sensu* since I hold that politics exists insofar as the exercise of power does not rest upon any *arkhê*”¹⁴¹. Nevertheless, my view is that Rancière shares more things with anarchism than just the etymological origin of the concept, as I am attempting to prove.

For instance, the way Rancière comprehends democracy and the way some anarchists do, might not be that different¹⁴². McLaughlin states that “for anarchists, meaningful democracy is not merely ‘political’. It might be termed “social democracy”, had that expression not been politically debased by former socialists. Instead, John

¹⁴⁰ Ibid, 46.

¹⁴¹ Rancière, “Against an Ebbing Tide”, 238

¹⁴² I am only going to explain what Rancière and anarchists think about democracy. I am not going to disclose the relationship between anarchism and democracy due to its complexity. One of the questions it might arise is whether anarchism and democracy are exclusive or not. Although some authors might defend that anarchist might promote a democratic society, Woodcock claims that they are incompatible: “Democracy advocates the sovereignty of the people. Anarchism advocates the sovereignty of the person. This means that automatically the anarchists deny many of the forms and viewpoints of democracy”. in *Anarchism: A History of Libertarian Ideas and Movements*, (Cleveland: Meridian Books, 1962), 32.

Dewey's conception of "democracy as a way of life" fits the anarchist bill¹⁴³. So, both Rancière and the anarchist would refuse the common idea of democracy as a way of government and adopt the conception of a form of life, always in tension with the governing institutions. As Rancière explains, "Democracy is the disruption of such power and of the circularity of the *arkhé*. It is an anarchic principle that must be presupposed for politics to exist at all insofar as it is anarchic it precludes the self-grounding of politics"¹⁴⁴. This leads us to another important relationship between the common understanding of democracy, by both Rancière and the anarchist, and the foundation of the *arkhé*/authority.

Rancière explicates that it is the anarchic principle (although not anarchist), the lack of foundation, which is the reason for the politics to exist. Rancière does not share the scepticism of the anarchist towards the *arkhé* and does he question either its moral foundation. While for the anarchist (as I described in the second chapter) the result is not determined. Since the beginning, for Rancière it is clear that there is nothing that can justify the authority, and he gives no reasons for that lack of justification. Rancière focuses more on the results of equality, the consequences of his experiment rather than giving arguments to justify his presupposition. For that, he only exposes the premise that all intelligence might be equal, for no opposing truth has been proved¹⁴⁵. It is crucial, however, not to take Rancière's equality as his *arkhé*. Equality, for him, is not something that is taken for granted, but it has to be continuously verified¹⁴⁶, or to put it in another way, his principle is not equality but its supposition¹⁴⁷. On the other hand, anarchists focus more on the arguments pro and con for the justification of the authority, leaving the conception of a better society, although not in a second place, but that discussed. Some anarchists assume that a society without authority will necessarily be better, such as Kropotkin, but they do not usually go deeper into the details. The reason for that might be the fear to be stereotyped as utopian, and as I explained in the second

¹⁴³ MacLaughlin, *Anarchism and Authority*, 172.

¹⁴⁴ Rancière, "Does Democracy mean something?", 53.

¹⁴⁵ Rancière, *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*, 46.

¹⁴⁶ Jacques Rancière, "The Thinking of Dissensus: Politics and Aesthetics" in *Reading Rancière*, 15.

¹⁴⁷ Idem.

chapter, anarchists show an ambivalent attitude towards utopianism. Contrary to what some author's think¹⁴⁸, in my view Rancière has little relationship with utopianism, not because it lacks the aim of the anarchists for a better society, but because, he does not go further into what that better society will look like. He just gives tools for the intellectual emancipation and describes some events where it has happened. May supports the same view when he states that "the other reason Rancière's democratic politics keeps a certain distance from anarchism is the element of utopianism that creeps into anarchist thoughts"¹⁴⁹.

Rancière might also be making a contribution to the anarchist cause if we understand it as McLaughlin describes it: "In fact, a minimal result of the entire enterprise could be the provocation of a new political idea, something imperfect no doubt, but progressive after all"¹⁵⁰. In that sense, Rancière gives a proper frame for the progression with its police -and *le partage du sensible*- being modified by political actions. However, "progress" is a controversial concept, both for Rancière and for anarchists. For the latter, progress can be used as an excuse for oppression: "Bakunin's worry was that Marx's scientific theory was exclusively focused on the liberation of the urban working class and that the communist revolution would lead to the oppression of all other workers in the name of economic progress"¹⁵¹. That is why anarchists are quite reluctant to describing their means as "progressive", or at least as this is usually understood. On this ground, when McLaughlin refers to progression, he is probably implying an improvement in morality of the society by the suppression of inequality,

¹⁴⁸ Peter Hallward alerts us of the inconsequential account of Rancière's democracy. He adds that, "Rancière's egalitarianism, no less than Schiller's notion of play, risks confinement to the 'unsubstantial kingdom of the imagination'" (Schiller: Letters, 128). In my view, Rancière's equality is correlated to reality and is not only a fantasy, paradoxically, not because it is a given state, because it is a hypothesis or a presupposition. The statement of "everybody *might be* equally intelligent" is very different in essence to the "everybody *is* equally intelligent". While the second is a statement hard to prove and, therefore, might be far from the reality, the first statement does not attempt to be a description of the reality but an investigation about the consequences. Hallward, "Staging Equality. Rancière's Theatocracy and the Limits of Anarchic Equality" in *Jacques Rancière*, 157.

¹⁴⁹ May, *The Political Thought of Jacques Rancière*, 98.

¹⁵⁰ McLaughlin, *Anarchism and Authority*, 80.

¹⁵¹ Kinna, *Anarchism*, 40.

exploitation and authority, and not that much to progress as increase in wealth and material comfort¹⁵².

For Rancière, progress is another way of referring to inequality. Thus, there is a contradiction regarding progress:

“a man of progress is a man who moves forward, who goes to see, experiments, changes his practice, verifies his knowledge, and so on without end. This is the literal definition of the word progress. But now a man of progress is something else as well: a man whose thinking takes the *opinion* of progress as its point of departure, who erects that opinion to the level of the dominant explication of the social order”¹⁵³.

Although there is a sense of evolution in Rancière, in terms of emancipating individuals and creating new identities by the demonstration of equality, this evolution could hardly be seen as “progress”. What Rancière rejects is that one group judges another as inferior and, thus, establishes an inequality inexistent beforehand. Progress for Rancière is the distance of the educated and uneducated men, from those who know and do not know -as it is typical in the French author, some of the political problems and situations are also shown in the pedagogical realm. However, progress as Rancière understands it can also be extrapolated to Bakunin’s words and say that inequality would be to classify between those who have means for a revolution -the urban working class- and the other workers without means for that -the farmers, for instance.

Although I mentioned that Rancière’s theory implies an evolution, this should not be understood as the evolution Kropotkin suggested. According to Kropotkin, the natural inclination of the human being is to co-operate and not to compete as Darwin attempted to demonstrate. Therefore, evaluation would be based on mutual aid and

¹⁵² Woodcock, *Anarchism*, 28.

¹⁵³ Rancière, *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*, 117.

anarchism promotes this, while the state inhibits it¹⁵⁴. Rancière, on the other hand, never speaks about natural tendencies and instincts; his theory is very far from being biological. That is why Rancière partly shares the goal of Colin Ward and Paul Goodman, when they attempt to “bring anarchism to everyday life”¹⁵⁵. Rancière shares this aim insofar as he tries to awake us to perceive possible political moments, despite happening very rarely. However, he does not say that the moment of equality is an expression of natural human instincts, but an expression of a possible human condition - equality. Rancière omits any comment about co-operation, but he does mention that the revolutionary moment will always happen in the name of the “we”, never of an “I”.

I already mentioned in the first chapter that Rancière rejects the idea of spontaneous leader during the political-revolutionary moment. The way Rancière proposes for the political claim to happen leaves no room for any spontaneous authority among the protesters. He is clearly not against the spontaneity of the action as he expresses “All those who deafen us with their old refrain about the critique of spontaneity and the necessity of organisation forget precisely that an organisation is only political if it’s “spontaneous” in the strict sense of the word, that is to say if it functions as a continuous origin of an autonomous perception, thought or action”¹⁵⁶. Rancière is against any authority that might find an excuse to justify the authority itself during the revolt. The tool he uses for that is the “we”. The reason for this is very simple: the *demos* can never be singular. As Citton expresses it, “*les sans-parts* are always to be conjugated in the plural within Rancière’s grammar: the stage is constituted only after they have managed to speak as a group”¹⁵⁷. It is not clear whether the rejection of spontaneous authority is Rancière’s actual goal, or it simply an inevitable result of the *demos*, but the facts are that, it is not possible to conceive a *rancièrian demos* constituted by a single individual. The subject of the emancipation is the “we”, “they” or “the people”, but always plural and there is no leader:

¹⁵⁴ Kinna, *Anarchism*, 110.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid, 180.

¹⁵⁶ Rancière, “Against an Ebbing Tide”, 250.

¹⁵⁷ Citton, “Political Agency and the Ambivalence of the Sensible”, 131.

“This miscout [the part of those who have no part] is staged in a specific way: the construction of a *we*. There is political agency when there is the construction of a *we* that splits up the community and the invention of names for that *we*. I said that the *demos* -or the people- was the generic name of those invented subjects, which divide the community, as they supplement it. This means that politics builds the stage of a conflict between alternative figures of the people”¹⁵⁸.

Who is the *demos* for the anarchists? Who is the subject that will make anarchism happen? In order to answer this question without falling into mistaken generalisations, it is required to take the anarchist authors individually. I am not going to analyse all the authors mentioned in the second chapter, I will just pick up Godwin and Kropotkin to see the contrast between them.

Woodcock lumps together all the anarchist opinion and this is how he summarises it:

“anarchists have tended to welcome as natural rebels the *declassé* elements whom Marx despised most of all because they fitted nowhere into his neat pattern of social stratification; as a result the anarchist movement has always had its links with that shadowy world where rebellion merges into criminality, the world of Balzac’s *Vautrin* and his originals in real life”¹⁵⁹.

Looking at the anarchists more specifically, Kropotkin claimed “not a single revolution has originated in parliaments or in any other representative assembly. *It all began with the people*”¹⁶⁰. Here it seems that “the people” is referring those of a lower

¹⁵⁸ Jacques Rancière, “The Method of Equality: An Answer to Some Questions”, in *Jacques Rancière*, 284.

¹⁵⁹ Woodcock, *Anarchism*, 26.

¹⁶⁰ “Modern Science and Anarchism”, in Kropotkin’s Revolutionary Pamphlets, p.190, in May, *The Political Thought of Jacques Rancière*, 95.

class, probably the working class. In opposing the working class to the politicians, it appears that Kropotkin was alluding to the first as those who have no voice and have no part and, consequently, agreeing with Rancière. However, it might be too ambitious from my part to compare them without having enough evidences of Kropotkin's thinking about "the people". Maybe inspired by Marx, or maybe for other reasons, a lot of anarchists have thought that the working class, the proletarians, would make the revolution. Nevertheless, it has not always been that way. We have already seen in Chapter Two that Godwin was a liberal anarchist and he did not defend the idea of any special group of people more appropriate than others to make anarchism real. According to Godwin, anarchism would happen progressively and inevitably insofar as individuals start using reason and reach the conclusions by themselves. The private judgment of the individuals would promote the absence of political authority, the absence of legal coercion and the absence of economic inequality¹⁶¹.

What is the difference between the anarchist critique of Marxism and Rancière's critique of *metapolitics*? They both base their criticism on the economic part of Marxism. As we have seen in Chapter Two, anarchists criticise that Marxism bases its explanation of the reality on one factor, the economy, and ignore the rest of the factors. In this way, the Marxist description of the reality is simplistic for the anarchists and does not reflect all the complexities of human relations. Rancière, on the other hand, considers economy as a non-political issue that is used in *metapolitics* as an excuse to suppress the political

3.2.3 Rancière and Pedagogical Authority

Rancière's view on pedagogy is very similar to the anarchists. They both see the official pedagogical model as restraining children from developing freely their skills and from becoming adults in the future with critical thinking. On this ground, Rancière and the anarchists stress in the capacity of the child or student to produce knowledge without the need of any imposition, but just the opposite: that the absence of it might

¹⁶¹ McLaughlin, *Anarchism and Authority*, 130-131.

motivate and encourage them to learn more. However, they show different approaches regarding the role the adult plays in the educative process.

In Rancière's case, he departs from the question "who has the right to think?"¹⁶² and concludes that everybody has that right, the master and the student. The adult plays an important role in education, not as an authority, but as a facilitator of the process. Rancière highlights that the facilitator does not need to be any expert in the subject, anybody can help the student, making sure she is paying attention and she is building her own opinions. The master's fundamental function is to interrogate and verify¹⁶³. That gives the chance for anybody who does not know to know, anybody who is not an expert to become into an expert through a process of learning based on the use of one's own intellect.

According to some anarchist authors, there does not have to be any adult to facilitate anything. As we saw in chapter two, Godwin was against any national school because government will always use its resources to ensure its authority is not going to be challenged. Rancière, for different reasons, does not support a national school because only individuals can be emancipated, a nation never will¹⁶⁴. "There is only one way to emancipate. And no party or government, no army, school or institution, will ever emancipate a single person."¹⁶⁵ The reasons for Rancière's rejection are founded in the process of emancipation which is individual, since it can only happen by the use of the reason of the person.

Bakunin suggested a school where there was not going to be any pedagogical authority and where information and knowledge would flow in any direction:

"They will be schools no longer, they will be popular academies,
in which neither pupils nor masters will be known, where the

¹⁶² Rancière, "Rancière and the Practice of Equality" in *Social Text*, 58.

¹⁶³ Rancière, *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*, 28.

¹⁶⁴ Rancière, *On the Shores of Politics*, 84

¹⁶⁵ Rancière, *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*, 102.

people will come freely to get, if they need it, free instruction, and in which rich in their own experience, they will teach in turn many things to the professors who shall bring them knowledge which they lack. This then will be a mutual instruction, an act of intellectual fraternity.”¹⁶⁶

Bakunin, as Rancière, rejects the idea of an education based on the hierarchy of the professor over the student where the source of the knowledge is only the one on top.

Which role is Rancière playing or does he have to play as an intellectual (if any)? May explains the dilemma that Rancière has to face: “If Rancière is offering only a description of democratic politics, then it has no normative force, and the critical element that it seems to possess is lost. Alternatively, if the framework of his thought is not merely descriptive but also normative, as this chapter argues it is, then it undercuts the very equality he endorses”¹⁶⁷. The paradox is related to what Rancière wants from his audience: to have an influence on them or not. In case he wanted to change his readers’ minds, he would be acting as a theoretical authority, executing the inequality he has so much criticised, by thinking that he has something to offer (an explanation?) to the others who lack of it. However, if he admitted that he has nothing new or different to offer, his theory would lose its strength and attractiveness. Perhaps, there is a third way, which is to take him as anarchists like Godwin or Bakunin took theoretical authority: by considering what Rancière says as a piece of advice.

3.3 Rancière and Anarchism by Todd May

Todd May is definitely an author worth analysing for anybody who is investigating Rancière and anarchism. He strongly believes that Rancière is anarchist. For that, he contrasts the *passive equality* derived from distributive theories and the *active equality* of the anarchists and Rancière. As Amartya Sen expresses it, the first

¹⁶⁶ Michael Bakunin in Ward, *Anarchism*, 56-57.

¹⁶⁷ May, *The Political Thought of Jacques Rancière*, 119.

always implies an equality “of something”⁵⁸¹⁶⁸, the equality that is given to the citizens (Rawls) or the equality that is protected (Nozick). Citizens are seen as objects of institutions instead of subjects of politics¹⁶⁹. According to May, the kind of equality Rancière and anarchists propose is active insofar it implies active participation and it is based on creating equality rather than wanting it¹⁷⁰.

May also includes Marxist authors among the authors promoting active equality: “[t]here is no contradiction between Marxism and active equality”¹⁷¹, because “[t]he communist revolution can be conceived as an egalitarian struggle of workers to appropriate the means of production, a struggle that does not require direction by an intellectual class”¹⁷². Arguably, the main conclusion that might be reached from this¹⁷³ is that May assumes that anarchists reject “the intellectual class” or any intellectual leadership. This view agrees with Rancière’s, but it looks like not all the anarchists (or at least the ones we have analysed in the Chapter 2) would agree with that statement. As we already saw, the refutation of all theoretical authority is controversial for anarchists and even more if there is a reference to guiding a revolution.

Samuel Chambers has compared May and Rancière regarding anarchism. Chambers bases his comparison in May’s understanding of the police and politics to refuse May’s view on Rancière’s anarchism:

“Rancière has himself actively resisted the idea of reducing his thoughts to anarchism. More substantively, we can show that when Rancière argues, as I quoted above, that politics

¹⁶⁸ A. Sen, *Inequality Reexamined*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992) ix. in May, *The Political Thought of Jacques Rancière*, 4.

¹⁶⁹ May, *The Political Thought of Jacques Rancière*, 12.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid*, 24.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid*, 79.

¹⁷² *Idem*.

¹⁷³ Although it might seem I do not have sufficient evidence for these conclusions, I picked up purposely some of May’s sentences because they reflect his thought. I am not going further in proving what May’s thoughts are due to the small relevance for my topic.

will *always* be “bound up” with police, he continues as follows:
 ‘the reason for this is simple: politics has no objects or issues of its own (1999:31) [...] Politics cannot be uncoupled from police; it only appears in this ‘blended’ form.’¹⁷⁴

According to Chambers, May wants to engage in politics by leaving the police aside, but in rancièrian terms, that is not possible since they are both bound together.

Regarding the question of workers as *demos*, I already mentioned in Chapter One that I had some concerns about how May understands it. Yet, May has a more controversial view regarding another claim: he defends the notion that Rancière supports the suppression of the *police*. “Anarchism does not demand the changing of labels on the layers, it doesn’t want different people on top, it wants *us* to clamber out from underneath”¹⁷⁵. May suggests that we “compare this statement with Rancière’s position that a democratic politics seeks to undermine police orders, not change or modify them”¹⁷⁶. According to Samuel Chambers, May misreads politics *against* police and, consequently, it has to be supplemented by a misreading of equality as substantive ground¹⁷⁷. Although I agree with Chambers, it is not my intention to give detailed arguments against May’s position. I am more interested in the consequences of his (mis-)understanding of Rancière and the possibilities that it opens.

May’s (mis-)interpretation of Rancière concerning the *demos* and the elimination of the police gives another interesting perspective about the practicality of the theory. Rancière himself admits that the political action as he understands it happens very rarely¹⁷⁸ and, besides, the revolutionary subject appears to be ambiguous. All these characteristics lead to a pessimistic approach towards the practicality of his theory and leaves small room for the hope, not only to witness a *Rancièrian* political act, but even

¹⁷⁴ Chambers, “The Politics of the Police”, 32.

¹⁷⁵ Colin Ward, Anarchy in Action, 22. in May, *The Political Thought of Jacques Rancière*, 96.

¹⁷⁶ May, *The Political Thought of Jacques Rancière*, 96.

¹⁷⁷ Chambers, “The Politics of the Police”, 35.

¹⁷⁸ Rancière, *Disagreement*, 17.

to identify one. However, what in Rancière seems subtle (like the political moment), May makes it drastic and more visible (like the proletarian revolution). Thus, in my view, May is contributing to Rancière's theory, even though he might not be too orthodox.

3.4 Forms of Rancièrian Politics

The next question is what form can take the Rancièrian political action in order to show the equality of the people. How much does it fit into the forms of anarchist protest? First, it has to be taken into account that Rancière gives a lot of importance to the language in the demonstration of equality, because “only an equal understands an equal”¹⁷⁹. This equality does not only occur in discourse, but it is the principle of the arts. Art is only possible under the supposition that it will be understood, so the artist assumes that the public is her equal in intelligence, in understanding: “The artist needs equality as the explicator needs inequality.”¹⁸⁰

Due to any other content than equality, the *Rancièrian* political can take many forms, including all the anarchist kinds of protest mentioned in Chapter Two, if they fulfil the criteria: to be the *demos* and to challenge *le partage du sensible* and, therefore, the police order. From this it follows that even terrorism can be political, as the French author understands it.

A practical example might help illustrating what anarcho-rancièrian politics might be. For that, I am going to briefly mention the case of the group Anonymous¹⁸¹, which is labelled as terrorist by some governments and institutions¹⁸². The paradigm is the one of the internet and the controversial discussions that involves, such as freedom of

¹⁷⁹ Rancière, *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*, 73.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., 70-71.

¹⁸¹ I do not pursue to prove that Anonymous is doing *Rancièrian* politics. I use Anonymous as an example of what an *anarcho-Rancièrian* politics would be.

¹⁸² Marc Garneau, the Canadian politician, stated in the parliament debate of 29th February 2012, that the members of the group Anonymous are criminals: “who is this group called Anonymous? Put simply, it is an international cabal of criminal hackers dating back to 2003, who have shut down the websites of the U.S. Department of Justice and F.B.I. (...) This is an international criminal organization”, in *Open Parliament*, accessed 5 December 2012: <http://openparliament.ca/debates/2012/2/29/marc-garneau-1/>

information versus censorship and personal freedom versus security. The question is: who administrates the space to navigate on the internet? What at first seemed a free and opened area to search exchange information, politicians of some states have attempt to restrict its use in the name of security. What does Anonymous do? Putting it bluntly, Anonymous fights against any censorship in the internet, they focus “on promoting access to information, free speech and transparency.”¹⁸³ They are considered anarchist and they presents themselves as “decentralised network of individuals”¹⁸⁴, lacking for any hierarchy, nor head in the group:

“Finally, to understand the dynamics of power and authority in Anonymous one must confront what is one of the most interesting, prevalent, and socially-vibrant norms within Anonymous: its anti-leader and anti-celebrity ethic. This ethic that modulates, even if it does not fully eliminate, the concentration of power. Anonymous provides what Mike Wesch had described as “a scathing critique of the postmodern cult of celebrity, individualism, and identity while serving itself as the inverted alternative.”¹⁸⁵ It is key to note that participants do not only wax philosophical about this commitment; they enact it. Participants remind each other with remarkable frequency that one should not behave like a leader, nor seek personal attention in the media, calling the practice “name fagging” or “leaderfagging.”¹⁸⁶ If you do 'leaderfag', you most certainly will receive a private or public drubbing, and if you have called a lot

¹⁸³ It does not mean they approve any use of the internet. See their actions against pedophilia, by Matt Liebowitz, *NBCNews*, accessed 5 December 2012: http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/45147364/ns/technology_and_science-security/#.UL-IXI3oxoM

¹⁸⁴ Anonymous, accessed 5 December: <http://anonanalytics.com>

¹⁸⁵ In Press "Anonymous, Anonymity, and the End(s) of Identity and Groups Online: Lessons from “the First Internet-Based Superconsciousness” in *Human No More*, eds. Neil Whitehead and Michael Wesch. University of Colorado Press.

¹⁸⁶ The terms “fag” and “fagging” are very common on 4chan, the Anonymous networks, and other troll-heavy sites, as part of the offensive language common among their users. Often used as an insult, it can also be used as a term of endearment. On Anonops, it has its own particular valence as there is also a sizable cohort of queer participants.

62

of attention to yourself, then with a mere keystroke, you might
be instantly banished from IRC.”¹⁸⁷

In my view, what Anonymous fight is against the authority over the disposition of the internet. Corrupted politicians and people in power attempt have no interest in the transparency of their business or the measures they take to control people, e.g., social control. Therefore, they have vested interest in restricting the exchange of free information in the net, presenting it as a national security issue¹⁸⁸. Anonymous, as I see it, raises its voice to claim that those who do not count, those who are anonymous, have also something to say regarding the limits of the free use of information. They do not accept the commands of those in power regarding how internet should be used or what should be said; on the contrary, they attempt to show the corruption and the control the security forces exercises over citizens. For that, they use different methods, from denouncing to *hacking* the computer systems of the security forces, always making their actions public.

Anonymous challenges the authority on the net and, by equal weight among the participants, they come to the visible sphere, making decisions where they were not supposed to do so. Anonymous speak for people who cannot speak.

¹⁸⁷ E. Gabriella Coleman, “Anonymous: From the Lulz to Collective Action” in *The New Everyday a Media Commons Project*: <http://mediacommons.futureofthebook.org/tne/pieces/anonymous-lulz-collective-action> (accessed 6 December 2012).

¹⁸⁸ I would like to clarify I am not against security measures on the internet. My goal is to point at some examples where security is used as an excuse to limit individual freedom for the benefit of a powerful group.

CONCLUSIONS

This essay has sought to reach a better understanding of Rancière's political thinking, by comparing it to the anarchist ideology. Rancière is a relatively new author compared to the traditional philosophical authors and, consequently, there is not too much secondary material on his thoughts; they have not yet been analysed in depth. This is double-edged fact: on the one hand it the interpreter gives more opportunities to be enterprising and original, but on the other hand, there are more possibilities for a misunderstanding of Rancière's theory because of the lack of solid grounds for discussion. I have hardly had any other material than his works to grasp his thoughts, and sometimes their obscurity led me to the uncertainty of the accurateness of my understanding over them, with hardly any possibility of contrasting them with opinions of other authors.

The case of anarchism is the opposite one; it includes many different authors with different thinking that are sometimes contradictory. On this ground, it is not surprising that Rancière has some arguments in common with some anarchists. For instance, Rancière's intellect is very approximate to Godwin's reason (and how reason was understood during the Enlightenment). The similar idea behind those different names is the one of potential, what a person can do alone without any imposition over him or his mind.

Concerning authority, Rancière shows to be clearly an anti-authoritarian. Based on the different kinds of authority I have attempted to describe, the most relevant one for his thinking is political authority. He strangely combines a strong anti-authoritarianism with an attitude that is not anti-statist. He also defends a gradual improvement of the society by the irruption of the political moment but which is only temporary and, with time, becomes part of the *police*. With the "excuse" of equality, Rancière dismantles any argument for the ruler to rule. The way he uses the argument of equality seems very anarchist in the sense of delegitimising political authority, although for anarchists

political authority is always related to the authority of the state. Related to the political or revolutionary moment, there are some similarities between Rancière's anti-leadership theory, and the view of some anarchists, like Woodcock, who describes them as "*declassé*" (without class). Kropotkin visualised a revolution carried out by the "people", which despite all the ambivalences, could match Rancière's description of the *demos*. However, the latter is more clear when contrasting it with Godwin, since his individual development based on reason is very far from the group action that a *demos* implies.

Rancière coincides with anarchists regarding the pedagogical model to follow, especially in the lack of authority. Rancière agrees with Godwin in the impossibility of a national "rational" school. The potential of the reason they both see, cannot be developed by state institutions, for different reasons for each author. Regarding the contrast with Bakunin, while in Rancière's model there is clearly an adult who makes sure the students are learning, the adults in Bakunin's model do not have to play that role. Bakunin also stresses the bi-directionality of information while Rancière's adult does not necessarily have to learn from the experience.

It is significant how Todd May has contributed to the discussions on Rancière. However, I have attempted to describe the reasons of his (mis-)understanding. I have showed my doubts regarding his view on Rancière's *demos*, giving arguments against his interpretation of the *rancièrian* politics and the *police*.

Finally I have attempted to describe what I consider *to be rancièrian* politics, using a practical example, that of the ciber group Anonymous. By their organisational form as well as their actions, they might illustrate better a connection between Rancière and anarchism.

In my view political philosophers need to offer something to society and Rancière does do so. With the current economic crisis, the welfare states are being destroyed in some countries and, as a consequence, millions of people are (becoming) impoverished. The situation forces them to protest against the institutions and those who have taken

the decisions. However, the way the media (the established order) portrays them is by delegitimising those protests. This is a reality that philosophy and, especially political philosophy, cannot turn a blind eye on this, because before being philosophers, we are citizens. Therefore, we need tools to wage against oppression and injustice of what is happening.

Rancière offers a theory where those protests are as legitimate as the established order, or as what he calls the *police*. Put it in other words, those who rule have no legitimisation to govern. Rancière presents a theory where an alternative partition or distribution of the sensible (*le partage du sensible*), an alternative to the way we think or speak is not only necessary but also desirable to avoid the risks of totalitarianism, racism and hatred.

Rancière provides us with a tool that might be even more interesting, not only academically, but also regarding practical issues when comparing them to anarchism, because of its fighting tradition. On this ground, I will attempt to make a contribution to the academic philosophy, but I also wanted it to be relevant for those who seek for help in philosophical ideas to fight for a better world.

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