

PhD dissertation **Abstract**

Scienze del linguaggio della società della politica e dell'educazione, XXX ciclo.
Curriculum: Sociologia e Teoria e Storia delle Istituzioni

Title: The aesthetical dimension of politics. Jacques Rancière and democracy of no part

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The starting point of the research is the assumption that actuality is not intelligible in a rational or moral perspective. The vanishing of every cognitive, moral or legal transcendence gives space to a reality that is complex and lacks systematic nature. Disarticulation and incoherence are the main character of an age in which individualism is maximally developed. The government of this differential complexity does not work through a transcendence reducing the whole to uniformity. Different and also antithetic paradigms coexist. The sovereign and state model has lost its centrality (both as political and economic subject), but it is not completely vanished. Forms of local governances, bottom-up insurgences, melt with demagogies, populisms and yearnings for providential forms of State.

All this tells us about a time of 'crisis', that is a crack between an ancient which is not vanished yet, and a new which is not arrived yet. However in this research there is no space for a semantic of the crisis: the long fragmentation of philosophical and political traditional rationality – the one who searched for a synthesis of the multiplex – is analysed to understand what emerges from this new configuration. I have called 'anarchic' this configuration, but without referring to the dramaturgy of a lost *arché*: in this research 'anarchy' is the absence of any principle, an absence from which emerges what first was submissive and deactivated.

In this perspective I have chosen an aesthetic key interpretation for the actuality.

For aesthetic I do not mean a philosophy of art, though the relation between politics and art is an important subject of the research. Aesthetic is meant as a theory of senses, in so far as sense refer to the coexistence of the multiplex. Therefore, aesthetic is also a specific 'sense' regime, in which the intelligible is not separated from the empirical, like in the ambivalence of *Sinn*, emphasized by Hegel. Aesthetic is the becoming-world of the thought. In this scheme there is no space for a transcendence – legal, moral, cognitive – but there is a multiplex that is able to express a political capability. The vanishing of the cognitive and moral dimension does not leave an emptiness, but opens a space for the insurgences that we must consider.

Even though the aesthetical dimension has a lot to do with physicality, libido, desire, in this research I have emphasized the chiasma said before: the 'distribution' of the sensible in which the empirical is immediately cognitive, e viceversa. For this reason, this research moves on the borders of a biopolitical perspective. An aesthetic interpretation of actuality could be said 'biopolitical' in a general meaning, because it analyzes the immediacy of political and legal relations. But it departs from this perspective in so far as it does not conceive the political praxis as an extension of life forces.

Jacques Rancière looks like the most appropriate contemporary author to engage an aesthetical lecture of contemporary politics, in so far as he intercepts all of the subjects said before.

The first chapter describes the method for this research. Foucault and his ontology of actuality are prominent. I have emphasized that, in saying actuality, I mean what is taking place in the present, what is acting here and now, what is given as an available effect. Such an analysis of the 'effects', to

borrow from Foucault, such a surface analysis does not give space to the idea of a radical Otherness out of the world.

After have described the methodology, the chapter dedicates two paragraphs to the description of the process of aestheticization of the scene, from the late-modern Providence State phase, passing through the welfare state phase, until the neoliberal age in which we are (the research takes account of the debate about the end of neoliberalism, but it does not dwell on this subject. As I have emphasized, the empirical and cognitive chiasma, I have described this process of aestheticization taking into account first, in the second paragraph, the concrete historical evolution, then, in the third and last paragraph, I have analyzed the philosophical and political theories. The whole analysis has underlined, on a historical-conceptual level, the ambivalence of this process that, even though it is based on a tending universalistic cognitive and moral base, shifts the centre of gravity of the power, and also the one of the self-responsibility, toward a individuality increasingly autonome. This is the subject of the pastoral power, increasingly individualist, linked with the one of the Kantian self-love. The representative and universalistic model receives in its synthesis what overcomes it. In this way – through different passages corresponding to different paragraphs – we arrive to the late twentieth century, characterized by a total adherence to the facticity. This is a total inversion of the liberal perspective, in which human praxis sustained itself and did not need to be protect nor manipulated from outside: now neither politic, neither ethics, nor knowledge are able to bear themselves, indeed, in the age of the limitless possibilities end infinite risks due to the technic, politics, ethics and science precipitate in an abyss from which only a god can save us.

The chapter ends with an analysis of the most recent neoliberal phase, characterized by a strong interiorization of the rule from the people: this assimilation or incarnation of the rule ensure an order in the chaos, or, more precisely, ensures an order through the chaos, in a perpetual emergency which is never stopped by a sovereign decision.

The second chapter introduces Jacques Rancière.

I have introduced, in a first and brief paragraph, through a gap relative to other figures of the contemporary political philosophy. The aim is to show the reasons why, in the perspective of this research, I consider Rancière as a *politically* productive author. The gaps that I emphasise keep Rancière far from the logic of conflict, and, above all, far from an ethical-mystical approach to the political (such as the one that animates the philosophies of radical otherness, from Lyotard, to Derrida to Badiou).

The second chapter restarts with a brief historical outline of the work of Rancière, from the earlier books to the latest. I have emphasized a point that the literature has always ignored: the centrality of the power-knowledge nexus in all the work of Rancière (of course the confrontation with Foucault is perpetual).

The debate about Rancière is exploded starting from the publication of *La méésentente* (1995), a book that has retrospectively enlightened the former publications, in the light of the particular nexus politics-aesthetic; but this research emphasize the specifically political point in Rancière: that is an analysis of the relation knowledge-power which performative in so far as the same products of this analysis subtract themselves to the identification, they can't be put in a specific field of science, and so they disturb the most important dispositive through which the neoliberal system ensures its operativity in an anarchy situation, that is the evaluation dispositive. Rancière's books, since the second half of the Sixties, show simultaneously two things: first, politics does not depend on science, that is dominated classes are able to autonomously build the ideological and practical weapons for their struggle; at the same time, politics is not an identification process in which the subordinates are claiming an identity and a knowledge fitted to them: political subjectivation is a process that breaks the fitness under which each one shall have his place in a symbolical and material configuration that is anarchistic, and yet rigidly normative. Rancière's books walk down the border of knowledge, and they force their closure, not only in the analysis but also in a performative manner, as undecidable 'research products', that cannot be allocated in a specific field of science.

I have described Rancière's critic about different fields of science, such as historiography, sociology, pedagogy, to show the reactionary character of the human and social sciences, their perpetual attempt to capture the knowledge that emerges from human praxis, in order to uniquely identify the subjects of these knowledges and praxis.

The argument raised by the research is that, well before Rancière developed the concepts of a politics of aesthetics, in the nineties, an aesthetical dimension takes shape in his thought. The chance to break the material and symbolical circle that ties one to his cognitive *raison d'être*, stands in the said before chiasma. Rancière traces an aesthetical dimension of politics because, before focusing on the relation between art and politics, he dodges the representative doubling not in order to plunge in the irrationalism of life immediacy, but to emphasize the effectivity, the becoming-world of thought: this is effectivity of thought produces becoming subjectivations that escape every identification and modify the given relations between knowledge and power.

The last paragraph of the chapter is dedicated to the analysis of the moment when in Rancière emerges, as a natural outlet of his research, the concept of subjectivation

The third chapter discusses the most famous Rancière's thesis, that is disagreement, and distribution of the sensible, aesthetical unconscious. This paragraph draws conclusion from all said before.

The most important Rancière's thesis are compared to his major critics. First of all to Honneth and his recognition theory. Than the long debat with Badiou and his theory of event. Finally a confrontation between Laclau's concept of rhetoric, and chain of equivalence and Rancière's poetic of knowledge.