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Critical management education as a vehicle for emancipation: Exploring the philosophy of Jacques Rancière

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Abstract:
This paper aims to contribute to the literature on Critical Management Education (CME) by drawing on the work of philosopher, Jacques Rancière, whose thinking provides a means of resolving the dilemma underlying CME. It raises fundamental questions regarding the position of authority and the expertise of the critical educator, while at the same time dispelling the illusion of collaboration and consensus with students and managers. By presenting equality as an assumption to be actualised, Rancière invites us to reject the appropriation harboured by expert knowledge and the assignation of positions that this implies. On this basis, we can restructure the place of management and management education as a fertile ground for the emergence of dissensus in order to politicise what was neutralised and to give voice to those who have no voice.

Keywords:
Critical Management Education, Critical Management Studies, Emancipation, Rancière

INTRODUCTION

Characterised by a technically-oriented perspective that focuses uniquely on an instrumental dimension, and structured around the transfer of 'best practice' to improve performance, management education serves to perpetuate the systems of domination that permeate the world of business organisations.
This is the criticism levelled by Critical Management Education (CME) authors at traditional teaching methods in the discipline. The latter insist on the need to disengage from the dominant model in order, on the

one hand, to better articulate Critical Management Studies research with education and, on the other, to escape from a neutralised and sanitised concept of contemporary managerial trends. Far from promoting the status quo or the existing social order conveyed by traditional approaches, CME's purpose is to highlight the potential for emancipation that a critical concept of education can promote, leading CME to rethink academic content (Reedy & Learmonth, 2009) and methodologies (Dehler, 2009; Grey & French, 1996, Reynolds, 1999a). The fundamental challenge is thus contained in a dual objective: to denaturalize and expose the ideological forces surrounding everyday managerial actions, and to actualize the resulting alienations in order to emancipate the recipients of the academic courses, while contributing to the creation of a fairer society.

This stance is not exempt from difficulties, limitations, or even impossibilities, however. These include a risk of marginalisation and 'cultural suicide' (Brookfield, 1994), institutional barriers and a narrowing of the instrumental conception, which makes it difficult to express criticism (Boje, 1996), in addition to resistance from managers and society as a whole (Grey & Mitev, 1995), appropriation and weakening of criticism by the dominant model (Alvesson & Willmott, 1992; Boltanski & Chiapello, 1999), a shift in critical teaching as a form of expert knowledge that instils an overview (Wray-Bliss, 2003), and difficulties linked to introducing change.

An in-depth analysis of the literature in this field indicates that CME faces a real dilemma, reflecting two major and, to some extent, conflicting positions. In the first, we must save students from alienation by revealing and denouncing the power structures that oppress them in order to emancipate them. The second suggests that we must abolish any and all "reasoned distance" with the public by encouraging collaboration to promote acceptance of the equality of one with another. Thus, CME basically oscillates between two positions: the radical position of the teacher whose duty it is to expose domination, and a pragmatic conception based on active participation and cooperation with the publics addressed.

If the philosophy of Jacques Rancière[1] fails to provide ready-made answers to the questions raised by CME, it nonetheless appears particularly fertile for shifting or unframing the dilemma that confronts critical management education. In particular, it appears to meet calls by CME advocates to approach management along the same lines as political science (French & Grey, 1996; Grey & Mitev, 1995).

Jacques Rancière's thinking invites one to fundamentally challenge the expert/non-expert polarity by asserting the hypothesis of equality. It is nonetheless quite far from any idea of collaboration as it places dissensus at the heart of emancipation. From this angle, its intention is not to expose the domination mechanisms associated with management to an ignorant public, nor does it seek to reach consensus on the basis of a pragmatic leaning towards emancipation. Its main goal is to reject the appropriation inherent in the notion of expert knowledge, and the assignation of positions that this presupposes, by reconstructing the field of management as a fertile ground for the emergence of dissensus and

1. Born in Algiers in 1940, Jacques Rancière, Emeritus Professor at Paris VIII University is one of the most renowned French philosophers of his generation. A post-Marxist philosopher, he published a series of works on the issue of working class identity and ideology (e.g. Rancière, 1981). He is one of the rare philosophers to have taken an interest in the issue of education in his treatise called The Ignorant Schoolmaster, which is an account of the controversial teaching methods used by Joseph Jacotot. Rancière's work subsequently focused on the status of the intellectual and the expert.

to give voice to those who have no voice.
In its radical presentation of political issues, we believe that Rancière's work can produce a shift in thinking, and maybe even in practice, in the area of CME.
Our analysis is divided into two parts. The first part explores the main debates, obstacles and challenges of CME, with the aim of identifying the principle dilemma that we believe characterises it. The second part explores CME in the light of Jacques Rancière's thinking, specifically focusing on the egalitarian postulate and the concept of emancipation as a re-politicisation of the social arena. This leads us to consider some programming options for critical management education.

1. CRITICAL MANAGEMENT EDUCATION: AN UNRESOLVED DILEMMA

The main attributes of management education thinking and practices that CME researchers attempt to discern and expose are the functionalist, technical and managerial dimensions. This calls into question a form of management education that conveys an assimilated concept of knowledge and assigns positions and roles that must be adopted by researchers, teachers, students and managers alike in order to guarantee its effectiveness. The delineation of well-established fields of education on the basis of the discipline's main functions (Dehler, Welsh, & Lewis, 2001) leads to the sanctification of a form of management perceived as a largely technical activity (Dehler, 2009; Grey & Mitev, 1995). Such an approach tends to raise specific expectations in students with regard to the discipline (that is intended to be useful and improve their employability), and in return indicates the place they are expected to occupy during the learning process (i.e. a passive learner who is the recipient of expert knowledge).
Calling into question such "restrictive thought" (Hagen, Miller & Johnson, 2003), critical management education aims to introduce an alternative concept of the discipline.

1.1 The political project of critical management education

- Emancipation as a goal…
In the words of Grey and French (1996), the CME project consists, firstly, in viewing management education more in the vein of political science education than that of medical studies. It is less about training technical experts who can put into practice a set of techniques and skills validated by Science, and more about teaching management as a social, political and ethical practice that trains citizens who are able to understand managerial activity. As Dehler argued (2009), critical education reflects a political project by contributing to the creation of a more democratic society through the training of active citizens who

have the potential to voice their opinions. Above all, CME authors attempt to answer two key questions raised by critical education (Giroux, 2001):

- "How do we make education meaningful by making it critical?"(2001: 3); which leads, in particular, to an examination of the content of critical management education.

- "How do we make it critical so as to make it emancipatory?" (2001: 3); leading to an examination of the teaching practices to be implemented in order to achieve, or at least to foster, emancipation.

Some CME research has examined the emancipatory role that could arise from the introduction of critical content (Caproni & Arias, 1997; Nord & Jermier, 1992; Roberts, 1996…). The criticisms made by critical management education regarding the discipline's specificity (Reynolds, 1997) are not so much about content as about the inherent objectives. CME studies advocate the need to rethink practice as much as learning content. The literature in the field gives numerous examples of critical education experiences, particularly in terms of the articulation between teaching content, methods and contexts, in a bid to assess their relevance and how they square with the goals of emancipation.

- …through alternative education practices

The use of CME as a potential lever towards a more democratic society calls for a restructuring of the fields and functions usually reserved for management knowledge. Hence, much of the work conducted in the field of CME calls into question both the expert knowledge conveyed by management and the position held by expert and authority within the traditional educational setting.

Calling expert knowledge into question is envisaged as involving the relativization and complexification of the knowledge delivered. Thus, students are invited to re-examine their assumptions about the social sphere and the nature of management and organisational processes (Giroux & McLaren, 1987; Thomas & Anthony, 1996). The inclusion of epistemological diversity or the multiplicity of organisational forms also fits into this schema. Reedy and Learmonth (2009) thus suggest placing greater emphasis on the notion of alternative organisations that could offer "a counter-history to that which implicitly underlies much mainstream management thinking—contesting the picture of an inevitable progress towards the sort of capitalism we see around us in the West today" (: 247).

The campaign against "the hegemony of simplification" (Dehler et al., 2001) or resisting "conceptual closure" (Chia & Morgan, 1996) is based on methods that promote a critical reflexivity geared towards 'denaturalizing' management theories and practices, explanations on how power and ideology are contained in institutional and societal practices, and correlating objective and rational discourse with the interests of those who benefit from such discourse (Reynolds, 1999a,b). Learning about problematics and complex thought, and exposure to contradictions, doubts and dilemmas are often put forward as ways of fostering a reflexive mindset (Hay & Hodgkinson, 2008).

The emancipatory approach to critical thinking (Barnett, 1997; Kemmis, 1985) is linked to the ideas propounded by Habermas. As Reynolds (1999b) argues, Habermas' discursive theory on democracy provides ammunition against the perpetuation of a purely instrumental rationality, while also creating a learning space where citizens can engage in a discussion based on a rational thinking model (Johansson & Lindhult, 2008). This aspect of Habermassian thinking requires new educational practices that can lay the foundations for a "dialogue between players." Such reflections on teaching methods also echo the work of Brazilian educator and theorist Paolo Freire. Drawing from his educational experiences in Latin America in the 1960s and 70s, Freire called for radical changes in institutional teaching methods and frameworks in order to promote emancipation through collective awareness. This second thread, frequently mentioned by CME authors, is mainly anchored in Freire's criticism of the traditional authoritarian relationship with students, the duality between theory and practice, and traditional pedagogy, which he countered by a "problem-solving" approach (Darder & Torres, 2002: 24). Similarly, CME literature stresses the need to establish fewer hierarchical relationships in education (Reynolds, 1999a) so as to make room for the learner's own experience (Grey, Knights, & Willmott, 1996). Following Barnett (1997), Dehler described the emancipated student as a 'critical being' "able to engage in critical reasoning (thinking critically) in the domain of knowledge; in critical self-reflection (reflecting critically) in the domain of the self; and in critical action in the domain of the world" (2009: 34).

The pedagogical concepts in 'Experiential Management Education' (Vince, 1996), 'Critical Action Learning' (Willmott, 1997) and the 'Learning Community' (Reynolds, 1999a) are just a few of the ideas put forward to coherently link the content and the methods used in critical education. Experiences recorded in a professional training context again lead us to question the place of authority in management education. These concepts, which call into question not only the cognitive dimension, but also the emotional and political dimensions of learning (Vince, 1996) invite us to reassess the traditional teacher-learner relationship. 'Action Learning' practices indeed imply abandoning traditional teaching methods (decontextualised transmission of universal knowledge) and approaching learning as "a process of self-development, in which knowledge is acquired through its relevance to the real-life engagements and struggle of the learner" (Mingers, 2000: 221).

- The irreducible tensions of the CME project

The teaching methods described here prompt us to fundamentally redefine the relationship of authority with theory and practice in the discipline, and the image of the researcher-educator/practitioner-manager that is associated with it.

Given its objectives, critical pedagogy specifically raises the issue of power and authority inherent in all types of knowledge. Management as a discipline effectively fosters a complex relationship with the 'real world' of managerial practice. The contrasting answers to questions about the relationship between Management knowledge and practice

indicate the strong impact that the concept of knowledge (its role and status) has on the emancipation process. We believe that this is where the irreducible tensions that characterise the CME undertaking lie. The crack is embodied in two teaching orientations which we will refer to, respectively, as the radical orientation and the pragmatic orientation.
Radical orientation supporters maintain that we must shake off the idea of educational subordination to practice and practitioners since this can result in identity insecurity and other paradoxical and negative attitudes that impact on teaching quality, as illustrated by the following quotation:

> *"The veneration which many management academics display for MBA and post-experience students, in particular, is quite striking. There seems to be a belief, tinged with anxiety, that somehow these students have a privileged key (i.e. 'real-world' experience) which threatens to discredit or undermine their teachers' knowledge. (…) Faced with the insecurity which the real world-academia dichotomy produces, management academics often respond by, paradoxically, further entrenching themselves in that dichotomy by seeking to provide ever more 'practical' teaching material, and substituting consultancy for research. In this they seek to distance themselves from 'discredited' academia but, since they remain employed as academics, this attempt is always precarious, and indeed contradictory" (Grey & Mitev, 1995: 81).*

This analysis leads its partisans to identify the need for a clear separation of roles between knowledge and practice, so that the educator can seriously call management ideas into question, rather than obsequiously subscribing to the values of managers and to students' prejudices (Grey & Mitev, 1995). As Giroux (1988) argues, this stance by critical educators is close to the figure of the intellectual.
Advocates of the pragmatic orientation, however, maintain that an analysis of the relationship of authority regarding knowledge and practice should be explored in an entirely different way. The aim is to avoid undervaluing practice and practitioners and thus lose the potential to produce truly emancipatory knowledge. Following Reynolds and Vince (2004), such a change would lead to a change in the nature of relations between managers and academics: "Conventionally, the teacher–manager relationship is practiced, if not thought of, hierarchically —managers with problems, teachers with solutions— or more subtly, managers with experience and educators with the conceptual tools to help them make sense of that experience" (2004: 450). This somewhat simplistic view of managers and management, and the position of superiority it implies for researchers (as the one who questions, exposes and emancipates) was also criticised by Clegg, Kornberger, Carter and Rhodes in 2006. The latter thus explored the possibility of being 'pro' management "without being trapped in the limiting and problematic identity position that suggests any support of management is a support of technocratic desires for performativity" (Clegg, et al., 2006: 12). This notion prompts us to consider an approach to education that places theory and practice in a dialogical and reflexive relationship in much the same way as it is posited in traditional pragmatic action research. From this

perspective, the educator is closer to the facilitator or the experimenter, engaged in the co-construction of knowledge.
Based on work by Johansson and Lindhult (2008), and applied to critical education, the table below compares the radical and pragmatic CME viewpoints.

Table 1: Radical and Pragmatic CME orientations

	Radical Orientation	Pragmatic Orientation
Conception of the situations	Asymmetrical power relations – Invisible restrictive structures	Fragmentation - Compartmentalisation
Concept of power	Dominant interests, coercion, conflict	Power as a means of achieving something, collaborative relationship, search for a practical agreement
Goal	Emancipation	Improved actionability praxis
Knowledge/practice relationship	Distance – Reflexive knowledge	Proximity – Practical knowledge
Orientation of the pedagogical action	Resistance– Liberation	Experimentation – Co-operation
Main pedagogical activity	Awareness-raising – Reflexivity	*Experiential learning Learning by doing*
Type of knowledge developed	Re-descriptions, new interpretations *Silenced knowledge*	Experiential, practical and conceptual tools
Reference authors	Grey and Mitev (1995) Willmott (1997) Dehler (2009)	Vince (1996) Reynolds (1997) Vince and Reynolds (2004)

The two orientations highlight the sometimes irreducible tensions arising from CME concepts and practices. They reflect the difficulties that critical education is confronted with according to the context in which it takes place, the objectives it seeks to achieve and the stance it implies. They express a dilemma at the heart of CME that so far remains unresolved.

1.2 The CME dilemma: Authority versus Collaboration

The aim of CME to restructure management education comes up against a number of difficulties that are expressed in different ways, depending on whether they reflect the radical or the pragmatic orientation of CME.

- The limits of radical orientation: resistance and marginalisation

The socioeconomic context and the institutional frameworks in which critical teaching practices seek to operate can help to explain the resistance to the effective implementation of CME. This resistance may be attributed to the learners (students, managers), who fail to understand the utility and legitimacy of critical education. It may also stem from the educators who seek to adapt to the expectations of their public, considered as fundamentally opposed to this type of pedagogy. This attitude is based on the notion that "managers would think of it as 'irrelevant, unreal and impractical, (interfering) with the bureaucratic process of commodification" (Reed & Anthony, 1992: 607).

For the defendants of a radical approach, such resistance reflects the inevitable tension between the nature and the goals of CME, and the positivist and utilitarian environment it seeks to challenge and combat (Grey & Mitev, 1995; Grey, et al., 1996). This socio-political and institutional configuration that has little sympathy with the CME political agenda generates a growing need to legitimize the match between higher education objectives and the needs of the business world, the transmission of skills that are immediately useful to business, and the application of academic performance indicators with regard to these goals[2]. However, as Reynolds (1999b), an advocate of pragmatic orientation in critical education, points out, this resistance may also be a response to the esoteric language and abstract preoccupations of a certain tradition in critical thinking that makes their ideas and ambitions difficult to grasp and discuss outside the narrow confines of academia. It has been argued that while one of the goals of CMS and CME is to align with the dominated to improve social practices and foster emancipation, this movement has in fact had little success outside the academic world (Adler, Forbes, & Willmott, 2008).

Moreover, by calling into question the values held by students, educators, managers and the organisational systems they are part of, may lead to emotional and mental problems as well as a rift in their private, social and professional lives (Brookfield, 1994). Based on a personal account, Brookfield identified the unease felt by students involved in critical education experiences. Reynolds (1999b) typifies the mismatch revealed in this work by a feeling of deception, a loss of innocence, despair and a 'cultural suicide' experience when faced with the hostility of others. For some people, the soul-searching that accompanies the loss of deep-seated beliefs can cause profound anxiety and loss of identity. Describing the design and implementation process of an MBA course, Hagen et al. (2003) argue that these issues threaten both the students and the teachers engaged in CME practice. In a study by Sinclair (2007), which compared a 'failed' critical leadership experience with a 'successful' one at Melbourne Business School, she illustrates the multiple layers that come into play in the implementation of critical education, and ways in which the rapport between teachers and students regarding authority and responsibility can be called into question. Consequently, a radical approach to critical management education can lead to forms of marginalisation for the people involved in the process. Viewed from this angle, one of the challenges that CME needs to deal

2. Moreover, this trend appears to be gaining rather than losing ground to judge by the academic debates taking place across the globe. An analysis of the UK socio-political context published by Grey and Mitev in 1995 questioned the financial pressures on higher education. Their analysis was consistent with that of Hollway (1991) which deals with the context of management education in North America and resonates closely with the movements in French universities at the beginning of 2009.

with can be seen as an ethical dilemma (Fenwick, 2005), calling into question the educator's responsibility, the goal pursued by the latter and the authority inherent in the position they adopt. Fenwick (2005) raised the following ethical question in CME: "How can an educator ethically justify such radical intervention in others' beliefs, identities, and values? Furthermore, what views can be tolerated? How can a posture of critique be adopted that is not also somewhat despotic, intolerant of intolerance, and therefore controlling?" (2005: 33). The critical community is well aware of this danger and the irony of the position which, in the name of greater equality, dictates to others what they should strive for and how they should perceive the world (Alvesson & Deetz, 1996).
Grey, et al. (1996) also highlight another ever present danger in CME, namely, that students are guided towards a path and ideas that critical thinking has already decided are important, thus substituting one educational agenda for another, and establishing a new form of hegemony rather than interrupting an earlier one. This reflects the tension present in a certain critical tradition which considers that it is incumbent on intellectuals and critical educators to "awaken colonized minds" and to emancipate by developing critical awareness (Fenwick, 2005). Adopting Ellsworth's (1989) analysis, Fenwick (2005) questioned the potentially repressive character of such a dominant position. The relationship it implies with authority and exteriority makes it incapable of concretely changing the hierarchical relationships that hamper the emergence of democratic spaces and dialogue.
Advocates of a pragmatic orientation stand at the other end of the spectrum and seek to avoid such criticism. However, they in turn are confronted with the limitations of their resolutely egalitarian position.

- Limitations of the pragmatic orientation: assimilation and appropriation

Given the compelling general trend towards recuperation by the capitalist system (Boltanski & Chiapello, 1999), the limitations of a pragmatic position in CME reside in the denatured assimilation of the criticism and its adoption by the dominant current.
Thus, as Zald (2002) argues, the main risk for CME is its own institutionalisation that can result in the loss of the critical experience. This obstacle to critical thinking was also identified by Reynolds (1999b), who points to the risk of a watered-down CME due to its incorporation and re-appropriation by the dominant paradigm. Reynolds thus argues that critical thought can be instrumentalised if viewed as "a disciplined approach to problem solving" (1999b: 173). This 'takeover' of critical thinking runs the risk of making CME a "dead space" that lacks all critical radicality, as Smircich and Calás (1987) maintained with regard to organisational culture, in the same way as Alvesson and Willmott (1992) with regard to gender studies in management. The inclusion of more critical teaching or content (such as ethics, social responsibility or diversity, for instance) in a management programme must therefore be considered in a reflexive manner (Reynolds, 1999b) to assess to what extent and under what conditions they are likely to fundamentally challenge the aims and goals of this discipline.

The pragmatic approach, however, defends the idea that we must go beyond a purely analytical CME, and instead should engage in a discourse of critical thinking and action via praxis. In this way, teaching practices aim to replace an authoritarian relationship with one of equality between theory/practice, teacher/learner and academics/practitioners. The underlying theory is that without productive commitment to action, analysis is empty and circular; but without reflexive and critical analysis, actions would be reduced to unambitious activism devoid of emancipatory attributes. Of course, many studies in CME, regardless of their orientation, recognize this principle of complementarity (Dehler, 2009; Ford and Harding, 2007; Grey et al., 1996; Mingers, 2000; Ramsey, 2008; Reynolds & Vince, 2004; Willmott, 1994). However, when seen in practice, the focal points that oppose these two orientations (cf. table 1) appear to be more incompatible than complementary. That is why Willmott, who, in 1994, considered the potential of pragmatic learning approaches to subvert the traditional hierarchical structure between the academic-expert/manager-student, expressed his mistrust of these same approaches in 1997, due to their implicit collusion with managers in an "indiscriminate devaluation of theory"(1997: 750). As Reynolds and Vince (2004) note, academics who advocate a necessary distance and disengagement with the dominant and the privileged (managers) or risk themselves becoming the guardians of the status quo, inevitably seem to end up distancing themselves from those who defend the possibility of playing the role of "critical friend." Consequently, attempts to bring together the pragmatic and radical approaches are confronted with the difficulty of conciliating these two orientations, ending up with an unresolved dilemma. Should they legitimise a position of authority that aims to emancipate the Other through the enunciation and denunciation of the power structures and the domination mechanisms that underpin social inequality, or should they resign themselves to a modest goal of "practical problem-solving," with active collaboration and cooperation as the necessary acknowledgment of the Other's equality?

2. RANCIÈRE'S 'LESSON': GETTING AWAY FROM THE AUTHORITY / COLLABORATION DILEMMA

Jacques Rancière's thinking is no stranger to the questions that run through critical management education. Moreover, it provides a means of examining the inherent dilemma in an original way. This dilemma points to the weakness of critical studies in failing to provide a valid theory of emancipation. This observation is consistent with Brooke's (2002) arguments in that she maintains that the 'emancipatory intention' of critical management theory is based more on the emancipatory process than on the results. Following this line, emancipation is considered as an ideal to be attained, always set in the future and sub-

ject to the uncertainty of the results. This process-based conception of emancipation with a focus on the conditions of expression, no doubt accounts for the major role attributed to Habermas' work in the field of critical management theories. In line with this theoretical approach, CMS and CME work generally considers emancipation through the lens of the regulating attributes of dialogue between equals, participation and the search for consensus, which alone can offer the necessary conditions to express an emancipatory intention for the establishment of an egalitarian democratic society.

Jacques Rancière's political philosophy differs from this position on two points. First, Rancière does not consider equality as an ideal to aspire to, but rather as a principle to be actualised. With this in mind, emancipation does not indicate what allows us to reach this ideal of equality, but instead refers to a set of practices that are guided by the premise of equality of anyone with anyone else, and by a continual drive to confirm this assumption. Secondly, the central tenet of Rancière's work, which underpins emancipatory practices, is not so much the idea of consensus, but rather that of dissensus. *Politics* (i.e democracy for Rancière) is not the series of processes by which communities endeavour to find aggregation and agreement. For Rancière, this falls within the domain of the *police*, as do the processes that structure the organisation of power, the distribution of places and functions, and the system of legitimacy upholding this distribution. Politics, and therefore emancipation, exists when dissensus is expressed, in other words, when the logic of police and egalitarian principles come together (Rancière, 1995). Thus, emancipation equals a disruption of the so-called natural order, whereby the institutionalised frameworks are challenged and equality is asserted.

These two points appear especially useful for 'unframing' the challenges in critical management education and as a possible solution to its inherent dilemma, thereby guiding reflection in this field.

2.1 Rethinking the educator's position: The radicality of the equality principle

Far from the position of an enlightened intellectual who 'teaches' the masses to make them aware of the domination they are subjected to, Rancière formulates the hypothesis of equality with conviction and condemns the hierarchy of intelligences, thus opening the way for a reinterpretation of the role played by the critical educator.

- Against the reproduction of the experts' power.

One of the unique features in Rancière's work is his immediate and radical assertion of equality between individuals. Obviously, Rancière does not refute asymmetry of power, power struggles or unequal access to resources. However, he insists that the starting point is not inequality but equality. The only way to establish equality in a given society is to assert it, to apply it in order to ensure its realisation. This kind of equality is not a goal to strive for, but a hypothesis to actualize. This fundamental reversal, which Rancière calls an *egalitarian syllogism* (2006: 509), is

one of the major contributions of his work, insofar as equality is emphatically declared and is never a mere component of a programme (Badiou, 2006: 143).

This is diametrically different to views such as those held by Pierre Bourdieu, which denounce "dispossession" as scandalous, and which consider the fundamental social inequality between individuals as the starting point (Nordmann, 2006). Rancière emphatically opposes the idea that an individual's potential is determined by their position, and that the latter are assigned a place and a role. Where Bourdieu maintains that the intellectual must help to reveal the structure of the established order and expose the forms of domination, Rancière, on the contrary, refuses to postulate the ignorance of individuals. He also dismisses the hypothesis which holds that the it is up to the intellectual to 'demystify' and to explain to the dominated the true reasons why they are dominated (Rancière, 1998). In *Althusser's Lesson* (1974), Rancière, breaking away from his former mentor, challenges the existence of a proletarian avant-garde which would be capable of enlightening the masses[3].

His criticism is thus directed at all those who emphasise the voluntary servitude of the dominated, who explain to people that they are alienated and that they are unaware of what oppresses them, and that specialists are needed to understand the meaning of the system. From this perspective, as the dominated do not have access to the right language, especially political language, they need experts, scholars, intellectuals, academics, in short, a "never-ending mediation process" (Rancière, 2006: 516) to defend their interests. Rancière, however, believes that what the dominated need is not so much to have their exploitation revealed to them –of which, in fact, they are already generally aware–, but rather a vision of themselves as able to live more than a destiny of exploitation. Far from the towering figure of a scholar destined to expose their domination, Rancière, on the contrary, insists that the dominated have reflexivity, intentionality and reason, in other words, all of the elements that enable them to become aware of their exploitation.

This implies that no knowledge or institution is able to guarantee the never-ending task of reducing inequalities (Greco, 2007). Any conception based on the hypothesis that knowledge provides a means of attaining equality, that emancipation is possible through theory, or that reserves a place for equality in the future as a distant political ideal, drives it towards an unattainable horizon and turns the figure of the 'scholar', the 'expert' or the 'teacher' into no more than a charade. This view also tends to depict the learner as a passive victim in the presence of an omnipotent and enlightened teacher (Wray-Bliss, 2003). However, in the words of Rancière (2007), the theory of knowledge required for emancipation is also the theory of the infinitely delayed emancipation. The potential for emancipation arises more from ignoring a certain type of necessity that would force you to stay in your place.

- Challenging the hierarchy of intelligences.

To undermine domination, one must tackle the fundamental belief in the hierarchy of intelligences by asserting equality; this is the

3. By distancing himself from Althusser, Rancière re-established links with a libertarian brand of Marxism which his teacher had in fact previously refuted by clarifying Marxist categories, to the point of dogmatisation. We are grateful to one of the reviewers of this paper for drawing our attention to this point.

leitmotiv of Rancière's work. "Our problem is not to prove that all intelligences are equal. It is to see what one can do with this hypothesis" (Rancière, 1987: 78-79).

The educational experience that Rancière relates in *The Ignorant Schoolmaster* (1987) provides an empirical reference point for this thesis. The Ignorant Schoolmaster tells the story of Joseph Jacotot, a revolutionary French teacher forced into exile in Holland in 1818. Jacotot had to teach students who did not speak his language. In order to do this, he asked them to read a bilingual edition of *The Adventures of Telemachus* (1699) by Fenelon. He then asked them to tell him in French what they had understood, not expecting very much. The quality of their work surprised him, however. The method, which consisted of learning part of the text in French while comparing it with the Flemish, proved very successful. The students needed no explanations, nor a teacher to guide them. Alone, they had learnt how to combine words and form sentences in French. Rancière argued that by associating the known with the unknown, much like when learning one's mother tongue, the need for explanation disappears. The school teacher had doubtless filled a different function to that of transmitting knowledge. Certainly, as Rancière (1987: 25) explains, he was a teacher in that he gave them "the command that enclosed his pupils in a circle from which they alone could escape, and by removing his own intelligence from the picture, he allowed their intelligence to come to grips with that of the book". What the schoolmaster had accomplished was to reveal to students their own intelligence.

Rancière continues by pointing out that this approach has nothing in common with Socratic Maieutics. Jacotot's work demonstrated that the figure of Socrates is not that of an emancipator, but of someone who numbs the mind, since he sets the stage for students to be confronted with the deficiencies of their arguments, where the teacher makes the students realise that what they say is either inconsistent or inadequate. The aim then is not to see students move from ignorance to science, but to start with something already known, already acquired, and to move towards new knowledge and new input. Thus, the ignorant school teacher is ignorant of inequality, and is someone "who wants to know nothing about the reasons for inequality" (Rancière, 2009a: 416).

As a final observation, the emancipation put forward by Rancière implies assuming that all individuals have ability as a starting point. It is based on a set of practices guided by the assumption that anyone is equal with anyone else and by the desire to confirm it (Rancière, 1998). Naturally, Jacotot's experience is not intended to be considered as a method that can be replicated as such in management education today because it dates back to a specific socio-historical context. It should not be considered as an educational method that can be imitated either. However, it does highlight the conflict between egalitarian thinking and the position of authority. According to Rancière, the point is not to oppose self-learning with institutional learning, but rather to contrast these two forms of reasoning: a logic where the transmission of knowledge is simultaneously the transmission of an order; and a logic where the act of learning is first and foremost an act where the teacher obliges

the other to use their own intelligence (…), since emancipation is always preceded by learning."[4]

Rancière's observations thus echo the champions of a position of authority in the teacher-learner relationship and an elitist and dominant concept of the critical educator. Rancière's response is that he specifically postulates equality between individuals as a central tenet of his analysis. Here, the challenge is not to develop a critical mindset or a sense of initiative according to the expert's criteria, with a view to mastering and instrumentalising emancipation. On the contrary, Rancière sees in equality an autonomous dynamic and not a means to an end. The inability to create emancipation from a postulate of inequality is very much at stake here, and this can only be overcome by knowledge. Consequently, the debate should not be expressed in terms of the ethics of a position, as it is often the case in CME literature, no more than that equality can be considered as a political ideal to aspire to: on the contrary, it is the basic principle from which one must think and act.

2.2 Severing the illusion of consensus and collaboration: Making room for dissensus

Renouncing the position of authority and the assertion of equality, however, does not necessarily include the search for consensus and collaboration with the publics concerned. Rancière thus stresses the central role of dissensus in the expression of emancipation.

- Creating spaces for debate

While Rancière's philosophy excludes all positions of authority and all dominant thinking, this does not mean that it recognises the consensual concepts of democracy defended by the partisans of an ethical, egalitarian or collaborative approach to CME. The political and ethical ideal of CME, firmly rooted in Habermasian thought, is based on the search for dialogue and the building of consensus as the conditions for democracy. Thus, it radically opposes the political definition set out by Rancière, which considers dissensus as the ultimate expression of democracy.

In effect, Habermas' communication theory presupposes common ground for recognizing the issues at stake and the ability to define them. Rancière, on the other hand, maintains that politics is determined by the very dissymmetry of the positions. The 'ability of all' scenario must be continually reinvented in a transgressive and conflictual manner with regard to the rules of the game determined by the official authority, an expert who determines the common problem and is fit to speak about it (Rancière, 2007). In his book *On the Shores of Politics* (1998), Rancière defines *police* as a structure regulating the social field, and *politics* as the implementation of the egalitarian principle and therefore as emancipation. The police maintain order, assign roles and places, and legitimise the structuring of existing social space. Politics is essentially anarchic. It disrupts the traditional democratic order structured around "those who are entitled to govern" owing to their birthright or their knowledge, and invites those who do not count to take part in the

4. Interview with Jacques Rancière, Dissonance issue n°1, April 2004. Source: (viewed in September 2011) http://1libertaire.free.fr/JRanciere02.html

debate, in other words, those who "have no part." The egalitarian postulate involves undermining the separate worlds of the dominant and the dominated, creating a space for polemic whenever the art of police seeks to de-politicise, to suppress political discord and neutralise debate. The shared world that can built through the repetition of egalitarian discourse is a place where those who traditionally are not allowed to enter, begin debating with the Other. It is polemic in that it involves underscoring the contentious aspect of realities that are considered as obvious, natural and taken as given. "The police say: move along, there's nothing to see. Politics consists of restructuring the space and what can be done, seen and named there" (Rancière, 1998: 242).

Unlike the model of rational deliberation, the discussion takes place on the basis of the heterogeneity of positions. It is underpinned by the fact that the subject of the debate itself can be a source of controversy (Rancière, 2007). According to Rancière, consensus reflects the idea of objectivity and the univocity of sensitive information. Through consensus, problems can be identified and objectified, based on expert knowledge and decisions built on this knowledge. In accepting this, politics is often wrongly considered as the art of pacification or as a lever used to ensure agreement between citizens. It is understood as a means to erase dissent and conflict, without ever seeing that this process "throws some people overboard" (Ruby, 2009: 93). And yet, as long as we disagree about the facts of a situation, there are politics. Thus, Rancière defines democracy as a sharing community in both senses of the term: "Belonging to the same world which can only be expressed through polemic, a rallying that can only be done through combat" (1998: 92). Conversely, the emergence of totalitarianism is the result of a shrinking political arena. It is associated with a growing consensual culture which reserves debate for the elite and experts. Rancière believes that democracy can only be promoted through the development of "dissensus" and not through consensus.

- Re-politicising the public space through dissensus to reconfigure the distribution of the sensible

Politics should be understood as a "transgression of the rules defined by the official oligarchies," a struggle between perceptive worlds, a combat between the world of experts, who naturalise the elements of a problem, and the world of those who "have no part," who must struggle to define what the topic of discussion should be. Therefore, politics is conflict, insofar as there is disagreement about the aspects of the situation and the elements considered suitable for describing them. It divides rather than unites. This is precisely what Rancière (1995: 12) calls "dissensus," the "conflict between someone who says white and someone else who says white, but who doesn't mean the same thing, or who doesn't understand that the other is saying the same thing when using the word whiteness." Emancipation thus refers to "an activity that is surplus according to the logic of management or common sense falsely declared as present" (Ruby, 2009: 51).

To become a political subject means speaking up when we are not supposed to, and taking part in what we normally have no part in. De-

mocracy, the "government of everyone" (Rancière, 1995, 2005), can thus be thought of as the paradoxical power of those who are not entitled to wield power. Rancière (2009a) redefines a "territory of shared thought", where the frontiers that determine identities are shifted and transgressed. Such transgression consists of "standing or looking in places other than those supposed to be yours," and raising the question of the distribution of the sensible (Rancière, 2000).

Acting in a sharing mode means questioning the existing order and rising up against the *status quo*. Political action therefore implies breaking with the configuration of the sensible and placing instead the concept of human action at its heart (Rancière, 1998: 16), something which materialises through interruption (Ruby, 2009: 22). According to Rancière, the political subject is the one whose "words illegally break in, because they are the words of those who are not supposed to speak" (Rancière, 2009a: 113). Politics exists in this act of interrupting an established social order (Ruby, 2009: 7). This is highlighted in the emblematic scene of the Plebeian secession on the Aventine to which Rancière often refers (2009a: 176):

"The patricians do not hear the plebes speak. They do not hear that it is articulated language that comes out of their mouths. The plebes must not only argue their case but also set the stage on which their arguments are audible, on which they are visible as speaking subjects, referring to a common world of objects that the patricians are required to see and to recognise as encompassing both parties."

The plebeians' words transform the 'map' of what is conceivable, sayable, doable, by taking them out of the places they are assigned to so as to make them visible and audible. Places are assigned and the roles established by means of discursive mechanisms that determine the social order and naturalise it by neutralising divergences of interest. Rancière's thinking invites those who are usually forgotten to play a role, those who "have no part", and subjects who are surplus to the organisation's usual participants.

In the field of management education, this implies rejecting the privatisation of managerial thought by an authorised form of expert knowledge, and instead "building stages" where silenced or discredited voices can become audible, and where the subjects who are excluded or ignored become visible. Consequently, while Jacques Rancière's thinking cannot provide a solution to the dilemmas inherent in CME, through the "unframing" it authorises, it offers a rich and stimulating substance for reconsidering the terms and rethinking the practices of this community.

2.3 Rethinking Critical Management Education in the light of Rancière's philosophy

Jacques Rancière does not provide all the keys for dealing with the difficulties arising from critical management education. His insights alone cannot resolve the issue raised by many critical authors (Alvesson & Willmott, 1992; Clegg, et al., 2006; Grey, 1996; Reed & Anthony, 1992), who argue that the institutional frameworks in which critical manage-

ment education could find its place are sadly lacking. This scepticism with regard to institutional capacity to integrate the development of critical management education is due, according to some, to the intrinsically totalitarian character of education institutions, which are unable to support and foster a radically critical programme. The Foucaldian analysis of academic and training institutions in management suggested by Boje (1996) is a reminder that institutions are by nature an instrument of order and policing. Based on an argument of a different kind, namely the eminently individual character of emancipation, Rancière underscores the impossibility of conceiving forms of institutionalised[5] emancipatory practices. Rancière's philosophy insists on the importance of taking on board *politics*, first and foremost, rather than the *police*. A political subject is not a group that becomes aware of itself, or makes itself heard or felt in society. It is an operator that connects and disconnects areas, identities, functions and capacities that exist in the configuration of a given experience (Rancière, 1995: 65). In this sense, Keucheyan (2010) notes that "a political subject is always an event (…) [it] consists of the spontaneous –and in many respects unexplainable– occurrence of equality and disappears as soon as a new 'distribution of the sensible' is established (2010: 210-211). Given this, critical education cannot be based on the principle of necessity, where the aim would be to reach a specific goal. Ben Hassel and Raveleau (2011), who propose a "pedagogy of responsibility" in human resource management, argue that the emergence of critical education should be left to randomness, chance and the unexpected, even though this might undermine its initial purpose.

The lack of interest shown in the issue of collective forms of organisation and practical answers to the strategic questions they raise, could imply that it is difficult for Rancière's work to be operational in the field of management. Indeed, it fails to provide direct or mechanical answers to the questions raised by CME concerning the teaching methods to be institutionalised. Neither does it suggest a solid educational device whose effects could be imagined in advance. Democracy occurs without planning or pre-design: "These fugitive instances in which equality challenges unequal conditions and reasserts itself are outside the sphere of any efforts to design society (…)" (Friedrich, Jaastad & Popkewitz, 2011: 72).

However, Rancière's philosophy does not attempt to discredit the principle of the organisation in favour of an exclusive promotion of "explosive scenes." It is not meant to set in stone the conflict between 'organisation' and 'spontaneity' either. On the other hand, it does point to a need to understand politics from its starting point (equality) rather than its final end, as well as the means to get there (Rancière, 2009b: 183). Rancière focuses on the prerequisites that are likely to lead to the emergence of fragments or moments of emancipation. It is on this basis, above all, that we argue for a rethinking of CME's call to view management as a political science (French & Grey, 1996; Grey & Mitev, 1995).

Rancière's egalitarian philosophy clearly rejects the position of authority embedded in the critical view of CME. Consequently, it distances it-

5. Here, his approach differs from that of theorist Paolo Freire because Rancière considers emancipation as an eminently individual process that cannot gain substance in a group setting. This means that emancipation can become political, not through its collective foothold, but through the individual's ability to universalise the construction of his/her individual case; this is what Rancière calls the singularisation of the universal. Moreover, Rancière does not believe that an institution in itself can be considered emancipatory. Reasoning in terms of institution or institutionalisation reflects a configuration of order and the manner in which distribution is determined, the organisation of frontiers between individuals who have a share in the competencies and those who are excluded.

self from the radical orientation and issues of effectiveness (resistance) and ethics (marginalisation) that this view gives rise to. However, the equality defended by Rancière is also clearly opposed to the pragmatic orientation, in that equality is not a process but a postulate. Rancière thus shifts the question of ethics towards politics, while throwing light on at least two areas of critical management education. Firstly, while equality may be asserted, this does not make it synonymous with identity. Secondly, equality is not attached to the search for consensus, as only dissensus can express equality and emancipation.

-Equality is not identity: equality of intelligence and heterogeneity of the places occupied

Rancière insists on the postulate of equality rather than that of authority. However, if 'the other' (student, manager, practitioner) is equal in intelligence and is therefore not placed in a position of inferiority (or superiority), this does not mean he or she is the same. There is a heterogeneity of positions which should not be integrated but debated in order to inform the dissensus. In effect, for Rancière the consensual logic is one which attempts to reduce the act of the expert who knows, the teacher who teaches and the citizen who strives for equality to just one single logic. Yet, the philosopher tells us, we do not need a link between these three dimensions, as equality is always surplus to the nature of knowing and to all goals, like a hypothesis that needs to be actualised. To preserve its radicality and its actuality, Rancière argues that we need to learn to separate the functions. An emancipatory pedagogical act is one that takes into account a total separation between what the teachers and the pupils do.

This separation of positions between teacher and learner, which can be extended to the relationship between academic and practitioner, assumes a specific meaning in the field of critical management education. As we already suggested, it maintains a unique relationship with praxis. Some CME authors have questioned the relationship of subordination between the theoretical and the practical, or the academic and the practitioner. Others argue against the concept of education dominated by a utilitarian morality and continual adaptation to the constraints of the labour market. However, what takes place in universities or in management schools cannot be considered as socialisation to the world of business where learning a technique is immediately correlated with economic productivity. While socialisation indicates knowing how to fit an individual into an existing political order, education that emancipates refers more to the way in which a democratic subject can emerge from an engagement in continually changing political processes (Biesta, 2011: 141). The 'School' is not a place of preparation but may be seen as a symbolic form of 'separation' of spaces, times and activities. It should be considered as a public space where the specific ethos of the educator is deployed (Masschelein & Simons, 2011: 157).

Rancière's philosophy enables us to think differently about the academics' claim to develop critical teaching in a space where their voice is sometimes ignored or discredited (Grey & Mitev, 1995). It reminds us that each actor has the legitimacy to interrupt the usual scheme of

things and to break into the debate. By asserting equality, the academic is justified in standing up against the traditional management concept of submission to practice, constructing a common space where everyone is considered to have the right to express their opinions, whether it's the student, the practitioner or the academic. This does not mean claiming a place in the name of 'superior knowledge' but rather asserting the legitimacy of an act that breaks away from the usual scheme of things. In this sense, the academic does not claim to be the holder of expert knowledge, and the relationship with the students is not intended as a knowledge transmission process: "The taught material no longer appears as an object of knowledge (…), but as a thing in common. His/her relation towards students is not directed at competence acquirement, but at supporting attention and the demand of speech" (Cornelissen, 2011: 23).

The teacher is therefore a player that can, like others, declare his or her equality and interrupt the established order. Thus, this act cannot be assessed in ethical terms, but only in political terms, contrary to the criticism sometimes levelled at it. Through this act, the critical educator does not reveal ignored knowledge, but operates a shift that is liable to change the map of what is thinkable, what can be named and what is perceptible, and thus, of what is possible (Rancière, 2007). In this sense, and to borrow Rancière's terms, the academic enters a process of 'dis-identification' with respect to the roles he or she is usually given as expert or management consultant: "What counts is to dis-adapt, to dis-identify with regard to a form of identity, with regard to a form of being, feeling, perceiving or speaking, which effectively corresponds to ordinary sensible experience as it is organised by domination" (Rancière, 2011: 491).

-Equality is not consensus: the search for polyphony and polemic spaces.

Making management and management education a stage for political debate implies fighting against the hegemony of simplification, conceptual enclosure and enclosure in the expert knowledge refuted by the partisans of CME. Rancière's concept of emancipation also invites us to reconsider the egalitarian assumptions defended by the partisans of a pragmatic orientation of emancipation, based on proximity with the different players and simply being open to their specific problems. In this case, we have to move away from the concept of the dominant democratic model that is underpinned by the construction of a space of integration for diversity and the search for a consensual agreement (Todd and Säfström, 2008): "One of the tasks we see for education involves the turning of antagonisms into agonisms, of providing a space and time for students to express views that create not only a culture of pluralism, but that tie these views to larger political articulations. In this way, schools do not simply "prepare" youth to become "democratic citizens" (as if this were a single identity for one and all), but they can introduce them to the political aspects of existing in plural states, which means facing disagreement on political instead of moral terms."

This spatial rather than processual concept of emancipation implies

continually constructing new spaces that are able to incorporate dissensus. The hegemonic role of management and its contribution to the mechanisms of domination in our contemporary society require some form of debate, perhaps today more than ever. This implies refusing to align education about management and its institutions simply with the interests of private enterprise and the values associated with the market economy. Such a requirement nonetheless means positioning the combat more openly as a fight against all privatisation of the space for building this knowledge and its destination. Extending the field of management knowledge construction and its teaching to other stakeholders, other recipients, to serve other goals, in this sense seems to us a way of actualising the principle of equality (Huault & Perret, 2009) and achieving one of the aims of CME, namely to make management a common good (Grey, 2004).

The call by some authors for a more polyphonic conception of organisations (Brabet, 1993; Clegg, et al., 2006) or of the management education space (Ramsey, 2008) may find new forms of expression in the light of Jacques Rancière's thinking. These go beyond - or against depending on the case - recommended CME methods. The polyphony advocated here does not serve to elaborate consensus and synthesis, and does not target knowledge and the acknowledgment of the other; it identifies what separates and what informs the debate. Making CME a political space implies extending the possibility to those who are excluded from taking part in the debate, and informs the dissensus that arises from their claim to take part. Fighting against the educational elitism of managerial studies (Beaujolin-Bellet & Grima, 2011) to promote the heterogeneity of the publics such studies address, escaping from the auto-referential nature of the discipline to open it to the divergence contained in other disciplines (such as the Humanities, as well as Life Sciences and Nature, as suggested by Ben Hassel & Raveleau (2011)), may be seen as a means of promoting the emergence of such polyphony. Governed by the hypothesis of equality and embracing dissensus, Jacques Rancière's philosophy opens up such de-privatisation measures, offering avenues that make management a necessarily polemic and constantly emerging "common stage."

CONCLUSION

"Politics comprises the work of extending the space of dissensus by fighting against the interpretative machine which continually obliterates the singularity of circumstances or reinscribes it in categories of domination." These words by Jacques Rancière (2009b: 10) reflect what we believe forms the core of his thinking, articulated around a genuine philosophy of emancipation. It consists of taking the voice of the dominated seriously, promoting a reconfiguration of social spaces, a shift in meaning, and the irruption of conflict in the place of the 'police' established by the official oligarchies.

To our mind, this general philosophy is embodied in pedagogic practices and processes. As we argued in the present article, it addresses many important debates in the field of CME insofar as it enables us to transcend a profound dilemma, namely, to either legitimize the position of authority to emancipate, or to accept a more modest and pragmatic concept of emancipation by collaborating with the public we address. Rancière's conception of critical management education that we outlined in this article is defined principally by an assertion of the postulate of equality of intelligence, while at the same time enunciating the heterogeneity of the positions occupied – totally undermining the role of the expert-educator emancipator. This concept is also characterised by the extension of management education to many producers and recipients, promoting the emergence of dissensus– which rules out the search for consensus between the different players.

While the publics concerned by CME are not always the so-called 'oppressed', their emancipation nonetheless relies on being liberated from contemporary forms of management. The place of management in society, its role as a control tool may also be called into question thanks to the creation of polemic spaces. Finally, Rancière's reflections invite us to reconsider the relationship between practice and the practitioner, by re-legitimizing the role of the academic in a space where his or her voice counts for virtually nothing in the face of the prevalence of practical knowledge. Like Rancière, we can thus envision the educator's role as someone who works towards asserting the intellectual capacity of all, and the construction of a space for the voices of those who institutionalised frameworks have rendered inaudible.

Thus, emancipation is no longer considered as an objective to be reached, as critical education acts more to reassess the postulate of equality. This does not mean transmitting management knowledge to an ignorant public in a purely 'expert' relationship at the risk of reproducing the present hierarchies and systems of domination. Neither does it mean making management an exclusive form of expertise, reserved uniquely for an elite. Nor does it imply overvaluing participation and collaboration with managers in a purely consensual design. At a time when society is becoming increasingly 'managerialised' and management concerns a growing number of individuals in the social space, it has become important to see management and management education more as a public objective and a place for debate, favourable to the emergence of *dissensus* and an interruption of the general scheme of things, with a clear statement that each player –teacher, student, practitioner- has the legitimate right to express his or her opinion.

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