



Rivista di Studi Politici "Politics"

www.rivistapolitics.eu

n. 17 (1), 1/2022, 71-86

Guida editori s.r.l.

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ISSN 2785-7719

Restructuring the Sensible Fabric: The Political as Aesthetic Space

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Abstract

In the past few decades, the French philosopher Jacques Rancière has elaborated a politico-aesthetic philosophy centered on the idea that the societies we inhabit are organized according to a specific distribution of the sensible which regulates human relations and their places in society. The peculiarity of Rancière's thought resides in his conception of political space as an aesthetic space: that is, as a sensorium, as a space that is organized and regulated according to specific ways of seeing, saying, and being. Then, 'the political' is not an ideological battlefield, but rather a sensible fabric that can be rearranged through practices of dissensus. This article aims at presenting Rancière's notion of the political to evaluate its emancipatory potential. The focus will be on the impact that this sensible and aesthetic dimension has on marginalized subjectivities, and how it can catalyze alternative processes of subjectivation.

Keywords

Politics - Aesthetics - Rancière - Dissensus - Emancipation

Conceptualizing the political

This article explores the relationship between politics and aesthetics as conceived by the French philosopher Jacques Rancière. The aim is to present an alternative notion of the political based on its sensible and aesthetic dimension, while also evaluating its emancipatory potential for marginalized subjects. I will examine the semantic sphere that enables Rancière to reconstruct the political, emphasizing the link between consensus thinking, rooted in common sense, and its inextricable sensible, and thus aesthetic nature. Then, I will demonstrate that emancipation can only occur, first, through a sensible reorchestration of communal space. To show the relevance of incorporating an aesthetic element into the definition of the political, it

is essential to illustrate the main issues regarding the latter's philosophical conceptualization.

The question of the political has been debated for a long time. The term derives from the Ancient Greek *Πολιτικά*, denoting affairs related to the state (*τὰ πολιτικά*) or the community (*τὸ πολιτικόν*), an ambivalence that makes it semantically complex. For this reason, as Ernesto Laclau notes, the political is frequently constructed in the name of the people who are, in turn, considered as the subjects of the political (Laclau 2007, 118). However, the semantic complexity of the political is mirrored by the aporia surrounding the notion of the people, which appears problematic because it has no real referent. In this respect, Margaret Canovan explained that «'the people' carries an assortment of meanings, many of them incompatible with one another» (Canovan 2005, 2). All conceptions of the people denote a collective political identity, yet the collectivities the terms refer to are not the same. Therefore, «the vagueness of the people is a mark of its political usefulness» (Canovan 2005, 3) as it is adaptable to a wide spectrum of contexts. Rancière presents a similar view, arguing that «the people [...] is a generic name for the set of processes of subjectivation that [...] dispute the forms of visibility of the common» (Rancière 2010a, 85). Processes of subjectivation forge politics as an artifice of equality, hence «the interest of the name 'the people' [...] lies in staging its ambiguity» (Rancière 2010a, 85). The idea of the people is operationalized by political actors, who address and mobilize it according to the situation.

Another aspect that should be considered is the nature of the political – that is, the seemingly intrinsic features that distinguish it from other spheres of existence. At this point, it is crucial to emphasize that the peculiarity of politics does not necessarily coincide with stages of proactive construction or with the establishment of a certain order. For instance, Carl Schmitt's vision of the political was rooted in the concrete distinction between *friend* and *enemy* – intended in their existential sense, not as metaphors or symbols – thus 'political' referred to «the utmost degree of intensity of a union or separation, of an association or dissociation» (Schmitt 2007, 26-27). The choice of the adjective 'political' served to convey «the relational and ideal aspects of his concept rather than the substantive aspects of 'politics'» (Frye 1966, 821). Considering the political as the articulation of an intense antagonism entails that politics arises in eruptions, explosions of violence, to the point that it is from the most extreme possibility of war that lies the possibility of every political idea:

a world in which the possibility of war is utterly eliminated, a completely pacified globe, would be a world without the distinction of friend and enemy and hence a world without politics (Schmitt 2007, 35).

Thus intended, politics is a relation of public enmity that explodes in moments of confrontation and states of exception, and it is also a moment of recognition, as it is only in such extraordinary states that the antithesis of friend and enemy becomes clearer. Liberal tradition looks for rationality, reconciliation, order. Against these ways of understanding politics in rationalistic terms, Schmitt argues that politics is about unpredictable and untameable eruptions in history, which have a liberating and creative effect.

Identifying the political as a conflictual, polemic space is essential to disclose the possibility of reinventing the *res publica* and restructuring the collective sensorium. Similarly to Schmitt, Rancière locates the specificity of politics in anarchic moments of disruption of the state order. To him,

‘the political’ rests on a twofold logic. On the one hand, governors govern on the grounds that they embody the power of birth, wealth, science or enterprise and exercise the competencies attached to those qualifications. This is the order of the police. On the other hand, those competencies are pressed into service, as political competencies, in the name of a supplementary entitlement. Governors govern on the grounds that they embody the power of the people, which means the power of those who have no qualification for governing or being governed. They govern because there is no reason why they should govern but that absence of reason. This is what politics ultimately means. Such is the anarchical principle which both sustains the edifice of political power and collapses it into ruins (Rancière 2007, 563).

What is usually called ‘the political’ rests on a privatization of politics and the appropriation of government and state decision-making by small oligarchies. In opposition to this, Rancière asserts that true politics, conflictual in nature, «has to be staged by supplementary subjects, whose action disrupts the distribution that amounts to a privatization of the political» (Rancière 2007, 563). Speaking of ‘supplementary subjects’, Rancière refers to those individuals and collectivities that are marginalized and excluded from public discourse. Indeed, the practice of government presents itself as predicated on a distribution of competencies based on the idea that «politics was the privilege of ‘free’ men, men freed from the encroachments of private life and economic necessity» (Rancière 2007, 563), an idea further reinforced by classical political philosophy. This entailed that the

quality of political being was denied to those whose life was supposed to be entirely dedicated to the private and domestic world of the production and reproduction of life, such as women and workers (Rancière 2007, 563). While the introduction of universal suffrage has extended voting rights to most people, the extension of participatory decision-making is only virtual – that is, not all voices count the same. To quote a famous line from *Animal Farm* (1945), a satirical novella by George Orwell, «all animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others». This seems to be the principle on which contemporary Western democracies rest. In the past few decades, Rancière has elaborated a politico-aesthetic philosophy centered on the idea that the political space should not be conceived as an ideological battlefield, but as something that has to do with a shared sensorium. A realm not only of direct participation, but also of visibility and intelligibility, marked by the reinvention of shared imaginaries and subjectivities – a space that, therefore, holds a clear aesthetic dimension which, notably, serves to further multiply its polemic and revolutionary potential.

The distribution of the sensible

At the core of Rancière's thought is his conception of the distribution of the sensible (*le partage du sensible*). In French, the term *partage* has a double meaning. Intended as an act of distribution and sharing, *partage* refers to what a particular community of people can see, hear, know and speak of, and which identities they can recognize. Additionally, *partage* refers to the divisions, structures, and separations within a community, those divisions that determine who is claimed to what. Rancière asserts that «human beings are tied together by a certain sensory fabric, a certain distribution of the sensible, which defines their way of being together» (Rancière 2009, 56). Therefore, the distribution of the sensible refers to the hierarchical order of society, where the dominant group determines what constitutes 'the people' within a specific community, and the body of social conventions regulating this distribution. The dominant group is what Rancière identifies with the police¹. The police is the organizing logic responsible for the distribution of the invisible and the visible, of speech and noise. The police

¹ When referring to 'the police' as intended by Rancière, I will use the verb in its singular form, instead of using the plural. Rancière regards the police as an order or a logic. Therefore, each time I mention the police, I am referring to the police (order/logic).

allocates the private and the public in distinct parts, and it pins bodies to 'their' place, to a certain space and time, thus pinning them down to specific ways of being, seeing and saying (Rancière 2010a, 139) The police order organizes the distribution of the sensible, hence it is responsible for what we perceive as the natural order of things. What characterizes the police order is that

it passes itself off as the real, that it feigns to draw a clear-cut line between what belongs to the self-evidence of the real and what belongs to the field of appearances, representations, opinions and utopias (Rancière 2010a, 148-149).

The power of the police order resides in its apparent naturalness, conferring it a presumed incontestability. In this way, the police chooses what is intelligible within a certain sensory fabric. Through arbitrary mechanisms of exclusion, it is able to banish, silence, and marginalize certain modes of being, individuals, and subjectivities. The words, the experiences, the very existence of those who do not fit into the prevailing narrative of the police order are condemned to the realm of unintelligibility. The concepts of distribution of the sensible and the police order are indebted to Foucault's formulations on discourse and power. For Foucault, discourse refers to «ways of constituting knowledge, together with the social practices, forms of subjectivity and power relations which inhere in such knowledges and relations between them» (Weedon 1987, 108). Foucault writes that «in every society the production of discourse is [...] controlled, selected, organized and redistributed by a certain number of procedures» (Foucault 1981, 52) and «mechanisms of rejection» (Foucault 1981, 63). These procedures exclude certain objects from discourse, and they also exclude speaking subjects from certain objects of discourse or from discourse *in toto*. Discourse is overarching, yet its regions are «differentiated and differentiating» (Foucault 1981, 62). No one can speak about anything in any given circumstance, and some people have the authority to speak more than others. Hence, for Foucault, discourse is a restrictive conceptual terrain in which knowledge is formed and produced, a framework delimiting the field of objects whose effect is to hinder the possibility to think outside of such limits. It is impossible to escape the order of discourse and the power relations that establish what can be known and what cannot be known. Similarly, for Rancière, it is impossible to escape the police order, but it is possible to challenge it to the point of disruption.

The dangers of consensus

Consensus means a modern form of government whose task is to make sure that, through arbitration and negotiation, diverging groups and interests are located in such a way as to avoid conflict. However, the most important and dangerous aspect of consensus is that is also «a global reconfiguration of the space of the community» (Rancière 2007, 566). True democracy can only occur when there is a conflict between discounted voices and the machinery of oppression which makes them discounted – just as art can only restructure the sensible insofar as it presents a conflict between sense and sense. In fact, consensus contributes to the perpetuation of the status quo, legitimating civil injustice under the veil of the apparent self-evidence through which it gives itself. The notions of ‘consensus’ and ‘dissensus’ significantly illuminate Rancière’s conception of the political space as an aesthetic – and polemical – space. The constitution of common sense, fertile terrain for consensus to flourish, is always heteronomous, but it is unilaterally regulated by the police logic as

policing involves configuring the common world as a stable distribution of places, identities, functions and competencies. The police order defines which places are inside and which are outside, which bodies are in the right place and which in the wrong one, which names fit those places and bodies and which do not. It is a logic of identification which wants everybody to be in his or her place, with the occupation suited to his or her place and the name fitting that occupation. For instance, from the point of view of the police order, a street is made for traffic, not for politics, which has its own places and its own specialists. By the same token, police logic aims to fix what is visible and what is not, what is given and what is not, what can be said about that given and what not (Rancière 2007, 561).

Thus, the constitution of a common sense always presupposes a kind of domination that not only regulates its physical distribution, but also its landscapes of the visible, the sayable, and the doable. Common sense is the accord established between a sensory regime of presentation of things and a mode of interpretation of their meaning. It is

a topography of the common, determining what objects are given as common objects, what spaces are visible as spaces for discussion about common objects, what subjects are counted as able to perceive those objects and to make statements and decisions about them (Rancière 2007, 561).

Usually, common sense is perpetuated throughout history thanks to the reiteration, and consequent crystallization, of traditions and habits, including their symbolic counterparts. Common sense assures stability and peace, as it does not lead one to question or problematized fixed behaviors and internalized thought patterns. However, it is for this exact reason that common sense becomes a strategy for perpetuating existing power structures. Indeed,

what consensus means, in effect, is not people's agreement amongst themselves but the matching of sense with sense: the accord made between a sensory regime of presentation of things and a mode of interpretation of their meaning. The consensus governing us is a machine of power insofar as it is a machine of vision (Rancière 2010b, viii).

This statement unveils the sensible character of the political. If 'the real' coincides with the distribution of the sensible, the political, inherently revolutionary in character, coincides with the aesthetic. Consensus thinking reinforces oppressive power dynamics underlying every subject's position in society. While it acknowledges the existence of diverse groups, interests, values and aspirations in our society, consensus only recognizes one sensory reality as legitimate. Therefore, it «frames a world where the supplementary activity of political subjects has no place, where the intervals of subjectivization are replaced by a continuum of slight differences» (Rancière 2007, 566), differences which all «appear to be ultimately indifferent» (Rancière 2007, 567). Furthermore, consensus is detrimental because its essence consists

in the annulment of dissensus as separation of the sensible from itself, in the nullification of surplus subjects, in the reduction of the people to the sum of the parts of the social body and of political community to the relations between the interests and aspirations of these different parts. Consensus consists, then, in the reduction of politics to the police (Rancière 2010a, 42).

Consensus marks the end of politics, especially one that aims to be democratic in character. This resonates with Schmitt's idea that the political can only exist insofar as there is the possibility of extreme conflict. Hence, the essence of politics resides «in the modes of dissensual subjectivation that reveal a society in its difference to itself» (Rancière 2010a, 42). Societies are arbitrarily organized in a specific distribution of the sensible, where the police logic is responsible for pinning bodies to specific places and choosing who is entitled to see or say what is given. The sensible is dangerous precisely because of its apparent neutrality and naturalness.

Neutrality annihilates conflict, the only thing that would be able to disrupt the order of things. That is why the only antidote to this is the practice of dissensus, a word that is already inextricable from its reference to conflict. In this case, it does not denote a conflict between individuals or groups sharing different identities, interests, opinions or values, but instead it indicates a conflict between one sensible order and another (Rancière 2007, 560). In fact,

‘dissensus’ means that you question the legitimacy of the division of things and the division of words, of how they mean or of how they conceal meaning – and this can be done in many ways. This dissensus always refers to a certain dominant state of language (Rancière et al. 2008, 409).

There is dissensus when there is incoherence, dissonance, unsettlement, or when there is a lack of correspondence between a name and the thing or character it is supposed to qualify. In this sense, dissensus is an aesthetic matter, a matter of ‘poetic invention’. By ‘poetic invention’, Rancière does not mean the invention of an imaginary place, but he uses this expression to indicate a displacement or a break in a given set of places and identities (Rancière 2007, 560). Then, poetic invention is a political matter, and this poetics of politics, responsible for enacting instances of dissensus, unveils the perfect symmetry between politics and aesthetics, and the respective relations between the politics of aesthetics and the aesthetics of politics. Hence, if dissensus is the only possible strategy for emancipation, it follows that it is only through the acts of reinvention and dis-identification perpetrated by art and politics that alternative constellations of the sensible can emerge.

Dissensus: between politics and aesthetics

The police order is inescapable because it controls and regulates everything that surrounds us, that is, the distribution of the sensible. The distribution of the sensible can be disrupted and rearranged through dissensual practices. *Dissensus*, central to Rancière’s philosophy, is «a conflict between a sensory presentation and a way of making sense of it, or between several sensory regimes and/or ‘bodies’» (Rancière 2010a, 139). The outcome of dissensual practices is a restructuring whereby «previously discounted voices are made to count through a reorganization of what counts as meaningful» (Chanter 2017, x). Rancière identifies two main ways of enacting dissensus: politics and art, understood as «intermix[ed] with one another» (Rancière 2004, 62). The interlocking of politics and art, of

political theory and aesthetics, is at the core of Rancière's thought, and it is the distinctive trait of his philosophy. It is crucial to underscore that Rancière does not use the term *politics* in the conventional sense. For him, politics is such only when it is revolutionary in character. Politics is «the activity that breaks with the order of the police by inventing new subjects» and «new ways of making sense of the sensible» (Rancière 2010a, 139). Then, it follows that

the essence of the political is dissensus [...] the political persists as long as there is a dissensus about the givens of a particular situation of what is seen and what might be said, on the question of who is qualified to see or say what is given (Rancière and Panagia 2000, 124).

Rancière understands politics as «a way of framing [...] a specific sphere of experience» (Rancière 2010a, 152). Thus understood, politics appears as a creative act, and for this reason it can be looked at through the lenses of aesthetics. Politics is bound to an aesthetic and perceptual understanding because it is always engaged with seeing, hearing, and recognizing different subjects, experiences, tensions, and identities within a given society. In light of this, Rancière develops his idea of an *aesthetics of politics*, denoting «a reconfiguration of the distribution of the common through political processes of subjectivation» (Rancière 2010a, 140). The aesthetics of politics is complemented by the idea of a *politics of aesthetics*. The politics of aesthetics lies in «the practices and modes of visibility of art that reconfigure the fabric of sensory experience» (Rancière 2010a, 140). Along with being the essence of the political, dissensus is also «the very kernel of the aesthetic regime» (Rancière 2010a, 140). Dissensus establishes a connection between politics and art, which both «define a [...] dissensual reconfiguration of the common experience of the sensible» (Rancière 2010a, 140) engaging in two creative processes. These are, respectively, the creation of new subjectivities and the exposure of new visibilities. Hence, social emancipation is simultaneously an aesthetic emancipation, a break with the ways of feeling, seeing, and saying that characterize any hierarchical order. There is a solidarity between the social and the aesthetic, a discovery of individuality for all, and the project of free collectivity, all of which would not be possible without a shared sensory regime (Rancière 2009, 35).

Reframing *aisthesis*

The political is always aesthetic because it is always concerned with matters of visibility. Politics is only effective when it succeeds in bringing a global change in the perception of social space through an interplay of controversies, in opposition to the commonplace and peaceful experience imposed by consensus. The social is not peaceful, and dissensus sharpens its inconsistencies, promoting an alternative distribution of the sensible where the experiences of marginalized subjectivities are recognized and heard. The aesthetic dimension of politics lies in the requalification of those spaces where determined subjects are confined – for instance, the relegation of women to domestic and private spaces. These spaces are not only requalified, but also rendered visible as collective spaces, reason for which the aesthetics of politics «involves these categories making themselves seen or heard as speaking subjects (if only in the form of litigation) – in short, as participants in a common *aisthesis*» (Rancière 2010a, 38). In Ancient Greek, the term *αἴσθησις* denotes sense-perception or, more generally, an impression of sense. Rancière uses this term as a starting point to promote a new conception of aesthetics, one that could retrieve its original attachment to the mode of being peculiar to the sensory sphere. Following this path, aesthetics no longer denotes a theory of sensibility, taste, or pleasure, but it becomes more applicable to the artistic entropy characterizing contemporary artistic production, while also incorporating a political, and thus conflictual, dimension. Reconceptualized, aesthetics comes to refer to

a specific regime for identifying and reflecting on the arts: a mode of articulation between ways of doing and making, their corresponding forms of visibility, and possible ways of thinking about their relationship (Rancière 2004, 10).

It is from this renewed conception of aesthetics that Rancière identifies an 'aesthetic regime of the arts', inaugurated by the breakdown of the system of representation that defined the situations and forms of expression that were appropriate to a given subject matter. In general, the logic of representation entails that a regime of visibility is responsible for both making arts autonomous and for linking autonomy to a general order of occupations and ways of doing and making (Rancière 2004, 22). The aesthetic regime of the arts is marked by the dismantling of the correlation between subject matter and mode of representation. Therefore, the identification of art is based on a sensible mode of being that is specific to any artistic work or

product. Then, aesthetics is used to refer to a mode of being that is specific to anything that falls under the domain of art, so

in the aesthetic regime, artistic phenomena are identified by their adherence to a specific regime of the sensible, which is extricated from its ordinary connections and is inhabited by a heterogeneous power, the power of a form of thought that has become foreign to itself (Rancière 2004, 22-23).

The aesthetic regime of the arts presents an anarchic vein, as it frees art from any specific rule or hierarchy by destroying the mimetic barrier that distinguished «ways of doing and making affiliated with art from other ways of doing and making, a barrier that separated its rules from the order of social occupations» (Rancière 2004, 23). In light of this, the aesthetics of politics

consists in making what was unseen visible; in making what was audible as mere noise heard as speech and in demonstrating that what appeared as a mere expression of pleasure and pain is a shared feeling of a good or an evil (Rancière 2010a, 38).

Politics can be defined as the activity that breaks with the order of the police by inventing new subjects and new forms of collective enunciation. It is able to reframe the given by inventing new ways of making sense of the sensible, designing new cartographies between the visible and the invisible, the audible and the inaudible, thus drawing «new distributions of space and time – in short, new bodily capacities» (Rancière 2010a, 139). Inherently revolutionary and anarchic, politics has no appropriate places nor natural subjects. As such, it rests on the anarchical power of the un-qualified or un-identified (Rancière 2007, 562).

A given manifestation is political insofar as it highlights a gap within the sensible fabric, so «its form is that of a clash between two partitions of the sensible» (Rancière 2010a, 39). This is also what characterizes critical art, which is able to bring about practical change by emphasizing dissonance. In fact, critical art's «purported task is to produce forms of political awareness and mobilization» by producing a «sensory clash [...] through the presentation of a strangeness» that emerges from «an encounter between heterogeneous elements» (Rancière 2010a, 143). This strangeness serves to sharpen political awareness and, by unveiling it, critical art «purports to produce [...] real actions [...] that engender new forms of social relationships and environments» (Rancière 2010a, 146). Thus, showing the arbitrariness of the order of things, artistic and political practices «introduce

dissensus by hollowing out that "real" and multiplying it in a polemical way» (Rancière 2010a, 149), positioning themselves in radical opposition to the fictions of consensus thinking. By doing so, politics and art contribute to the reorchestration of the sensible fabric, inventing «new trajectories between what can be seen, what can be said and what can be done», thus constituting «a [...] new landscape of the visible, of the sayable and the doable» (Rancière 2010a, 149). As «the creation of political zones of autonomy is based on an aesthetic experience» (Rancière et al. 2008, 410), artistic practices can reframe what is visible or not, and what is acceptable or not to see. Any reframing entails and relies on some kind of crisis, some sort of destruction (Rancière et al. 2008, 411). Hence, a political subject is the operator of a specific device of subjectivation and controversy that enables politics to exist. Political thought is not the one that is developed by intellectuals who dig into cultural tradition to find signs of truth, but instead it is «that which is produced immanently by the collective of those engaged in political action» (Rancière 2010a, 8).

Ultimately, politics is only effective when it is aesthetic; just as art is only effective when it is political. The problem is that art cannot know or anticipate the effect that its subversive strategies might have on forms of political subjectivation. Art could create a new scenario of the visible and a new dramaturgy of the intelligible, but these innovations operate to reformulate the world of communal experience as a world of an impersonal shared experience. Then, artistic practices help create the fabric of a shared experience in which new ways of constructing communal objects and new possibilities for collective enunciation, hallmarks of an aesthetics of politics, may be developed (Rancière 2010a, 142). After all, art is about creating a space for unexpected capacities, which also means space for unexpected possibilities (Rancière et al. 2008, 407). This opens up endless ways of countering the police order by presenting new subjectivities and making them visible, thus reframing a common *aisthesis* which, presenting a new shared sensorium, can tie communities and bring people closer together.

Dis-identification as emancipation

At this point, having explained the fictional and regulated construction of reality and highlighted the link between art and politics, it is necessary to give a better delineation of who is the political subject. First, if politics is inherently revolutionary, it follows that the political subject is also in revolt. Who is in revolt,

if not the uncaptured, those whose voices are discounted and framed within the dominant paradigms? It is useful here to return to Antonio Gramsci's notion of the subaltern, a term borrowed from the military lexicon, where it indicates the inferior ranks of any military machinery (Gramsci 1975, 37). Gramsci resemantized the term to designate the cultural hegemony that is responsible for excluding, marginalizing, and displacing specific people from the social, political, and economic institutions of society, thus denying them agency and voice as political subjects (Gramsci 1975, 303). This concept was then borrowed and operationalized by Gayatri Spivak, who asked whether the subaltern could speak, examining the epistemic violence central to the construction of subaltern subjectivity and identity as Other (Spivak 1988, 280-281). With this question, Spivak attempted to deconstruct the binary oppositions underlying colonial discourses, introducing intersectionality in her approach, and concluding that subalterns cannot speak because they are divided by too many marginalizing narratives – such as gender, class, caste, region, and religion. Thus, Spivak underscores the multiplicity of oppressive forces at work in society, whereby a single subject's existence can be mined, simultaneously, from different sides. For instance, she argues that

within the effaced itinerary of the subaltern subject, the track of sexual difference is doubly effected. The question is not of female participation in insurgency, or the ground rules of the sexual division of labor [...] It is, rather, that, both as object of colonialist historiography and as subject of insurgency, the ideological construction of gender keeps the male dominant. If, in the context of colonial production, the subaltern has no history and cannot speak, the subaltern as female is even more deeply in shadow (Spivak 1988, 287).

The problem with the subaltern is that they are constructed in such a way that renders them invisible. This entails that, on a broader scale, the subaltern does not partake in governmental decisions nor are they entitled to representation. To use Rancière's terminology, the speech of the subaltern is rendered unintelligible within the order of the sensible, which means that the subaltern has no partake in the shared sensorium of society and is excluded from the symbolic order of the political community.

The process of subjectivation of the political subject is prompted by dissensual practices aimed at creating space for uncaptured subjects to emerge both physically and symbolically. That is because

dissensus often triggers a process of dis-identification. A process of dis-identification is what creates a political subject. A political subject is a being that arrives as supplement to the social distribution, since it cannot be identified as a part of the police order (Rancière 2007, 561).

Hence, processes of dis-identification are at the core of politics. Identification entails conforming to an identity that is already given and accepted within the sensible order, therefore, it is a form of enacting consensus, reiterating the status quo. On the contrary, dis-identification is a way to enact a break within the sensible order, and its actualization lies in the reality of the gap, the 'un-space' that it created inside the space of the police order. In Rancière's words, «by changing the relations between names, identities and places, it created a space of indeterminate possibilities for unknown competencies» (Rancière 2007, 561), thus forming a new common sense. This new common sense can be formed through individual and collective practices. For this reason, emancipation is intended as a break with a given marginalized subject's body, behavior, language and culture, a break with the practices that pinned them down to their subaltern identity (Rancière 2007, 564). Therefore, the practice of dis-identification is a critical practice, where 'critical' means that which concerns separation, discrimination. Critical is any – political or aesthetic – act that moves the lines of separation, instilling separation into the consensual fabric of the real (Rancière 2008, 85). Ultimately, it is clear that politics, intended as a critical aesthetic practice of reconfiguration of the common,

has to be staged by supplementary subjects, whose action disrupts the distribution that amounts to a privatization of the political. Political subjects are unstable beings, constructed through processes of dis-identification (Rancière 2007, 563).

Conclusions

Artistic and political practices function as forms of dissensus, enacting a subversive, dissensual restructuring of the real. Political activity is no longer suffocated by the notion of consensus, but it is reestablished in a more radical dimension where it poses itself as an egalitarian possibility for supplementary subjects, marginalized by the ordinary social distribution. Thus intended, political activity stands as an alternative mode of doing politics, one that avoids any reduction of political subjects to 'the people', and any reduction of politics to governmental affairs. Processes of

political subjectivation are inherently revolutionary, as they aim to create new visibilities and existential spaces, decentralizing the order imposed by consensus thinking. The latter's endless reiteration of the status quo entails a reproduction of mechanisms of oppression and exclusion. For this reason, inclusive politics should not strive towards homogenization or equality, but towards equity and preservation of differences. In a society rife with discrimination and disparities, where not all identities and subjects are equally valued and recognized, differences and heterogeneities function as sites of resistance for marginalized people and communities. Social emancipation is always also aesthetic emancipation, as it is solely through a shared sensorium, that is, a shared repository of images and ways of seeing and interpreting them, that it is possible to conceive and actualize alternative possibilities, creating, through separations, breaks, and interruptions, an emancipatory reorchestration of the sensible.

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