

The Other Argument, The Other Existent: A Complicated Conversational Method

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“But why two? Why two instances of speech to say the same thing?
--Because the one who says it is always the other.”
(Blanchot 1993, ix)

In an article describing the development of bricolage as a social and educational approach to research, Joseph Kincheloe comments, almost as an aside, that “little work has been undertaken on philosophy as research” (Kincheloe 2005, 336). And, while three recent special issues of philosophy of education journals specifically consider the role of philosophy in educational research (Bridges and Smith 2006a, 2006b; Ruitenberg 2009), there is a tendency within even these discussions to focus on the relevance and usefulness of philosophical approaches for and in educational research, without going into detailed consideration of *how* philosophers of education go about their research and analyses. This article attempts to bring into focus a philosophical methodology for engaging with the other across the conceptual incommensurability of the difficult pedagogical relationship between equality and freedom. Specifically, this article aims to describe my method of constructing complicated conversations between Jacques Rancière’s logic of equality and Adriana Cavarero’s prioritization of uniqueness.

Prioritizing Equality and Uniqueness

Wilhelm Sjöstrand (1973) argued that the conceptualization of and relation between equality and freedom are crucial to how pedagogy is conceived, in terms of its premises, purposes and possibilities. Yet while he highlighted that equality and freedom are therefore fundamental concepts for pedagogy, the relation between these two concepts is not an easy one. Rather, Sjöstrand called it “democracy’s pedagogical problem” (1970, 120; my translation). Drawing on the implicit insight in Sjöstrand’s work that conceptualiza-

tions of equality and of freedom are contingent, and the explicit insight that they play a crucial role in how pedagogical possibility is understood, my research examines the pedagogical consequences of a relationship between a specific conceptualization of equality and of freedom. These specific conceptualizations are Jacques Rancière's concept of equality and Adriana Cavarero's concept of uniqueness. Rancière's equality and Cavarero's uniqueness both attend to the otherness of the other, and are incommensurable with each other. Therefore examining the pedagogical consequences of the relation between them places special demands on leaving room for an()other.

The logic of equality is a concept Jacques Rancière has developed and attended to throughout his career (Davis 2010, ix). From the early 1970s onward a prioritization of the logic of equality seems to motivate his writing (Deranty and Ross 2012). Similarly, Adriana Cavarero's oeuvre has consistently explored and prioritized the concept and consequences of the unique existent (Kottman 2005). Beyond absolute otherness, the (potentially disembodied) idea of singularity, plurality, and the particularity of (sexual) difference, lived and embodied unique existence has infused the directionality of her writing (Anderlini and D'Onofrio 1995). Exploring the difficult relation between Rancière's equality and Cavarero's uniqueness offers a way to reimagine the fundamental yet difficult pedagogical relation, identified by Sjöstrand, between equality and freedom. To my mind, the thoroughness and priority Rancière and Cavarero each have given their specific concept make analysis of their work an ideal vehicle through which to engage in this reimagining. At the same time, the question of how to relate the logic of equality and the prioritization of uniqueness proves to be a special challenge, both because of the incommensurability between these concepts, and because of my personal experience as a reader of Rancière and Cavarero. This article describes how I draw on the pedagogical notion of the complicated conversation in order to deal with that challenge and enact my analysis.

Oliver Davis describes Rancière's declarative writing style as

differing decisively from the lecturely authoritarianism for which it can risk being mistaken in that it assumes the reader is on an equal footing and lives him or her radically free before the thought, free to take it or leave it, free to disagree or remain unconvinced. (Davis 2010, x)

While Rancière does avoid lecturing and taking an authoritative position in his texts, I disagree that the reader's—this reader's, at least—experience of reading those texts is

“radically free.” From the first, confusing, time I picked up Rancière’s *Disagreement* (1999), I have found his writing seductive, in the sense that I frequently find it persuasive to the point of being unable to think otherwise. I found this same seduction in Adriana Cavarero’s texts, beginning with *Relating Narratives* (2000) and working through the rest of her oeuvre. This initial, seductive space was not one in which I was unable to think critically or ask questions of the texts, but I specifically found that while reading Rancière I¹ could not simultaneously think about *specific* modes of freedom, such as uniqueness. Similarly, when reading Cavarero, I found that I could not simultaneously think about modes of equality except through her critique of the specifically mainstream mode of the concept (Cavarero 1992). I could only think about equality *or* uniqueness, only through the logic of equality *or* the prioritization of uniqueness. This initial, seductive space was in other words monological.

Realizing that interrupting this limiting monologue could be fruitful and meaningful, I began deliberately asking Rancière’s texts “what about the unique existent?” I asked Cavarero’s texts whether their rejection of equality must also extend to Rancièrian equality, whether her critique of the subject as monstrous must also apply to the dislocating subjectification equality has the potential to make possible. This deliberate questioning of what the logic of equality might mean for uniqueness, and vice versa, led me to unexpected insights regarding the logical consequences of these two concepts, and regarding how these consequences enabled a reimagining of the difficult pedagogical relation between equality and freedom. This interruptive questioning, for example, led me to take the bad ontological intentions of Cavarero’s relational critique of the universal, neutral, disembodied individual more seriously as not just critique, but as strategically seeking to create space for the unique existent (Cavarero and Bertolino 2008, 141). Similarly, in Rancière’s texts, it led me to give more weight to the literary quality of, and use of metaphor in, his writing as ways of articulating the subtle movements of equality which the heroic framing of history is unable to record. Deliberately seeking to interrupt the argumentation for equality and for the unique existent with each other allowed me to understand aspects of those logical arguments and their interrelations that I otherwise would not have understood as readily. This deliberate interruption allowed me to read the texts with my own questions, and not merely be seduced by their logic. My practice of inter-

¹ I surmise that I am not the only one with this experience, though I am sure others have experienced reading both Rancière and Cavarero quite differently.

ruption initially grew forth organically, but formalizing it as a methodological approach has led to deeper insights and the ability to more fully reimagine the difficult pedagogical relation between equality and uniqueness. Specifically, I seek to interrupt the logical consequences of the arguments made necessary by Rancière's prioritization of the logic of equality, and those made necessary by Cavarero's prioritization of the unique existent, so that they might be compared in a way that respects their incommensurable otherness.

Acknowledging Otherness: Questioning the Possibility of Comparison

If comparison of these logics and their consequences in terms of the difficult pedagogical relation between equality and freedom was initially so challenging, one might ask whether or not it is actually possible. Certain perspectives differ so fundamentally that attempts to combine them or use them together leads to incoherence at a theoretical level—and, often, to a violation of or disrespect toward the logic underlying the perspectives involved. That I might be engaging in this sort of error is a risk worth considering.

Richard Bernstein follows Thomas Kuhn in his exploration of how opposing theories can be properly considered at the level of methodological theory. He writes,

we can say that for Kuhn rival paradigm theories are logically *incompatible* (and therefore, really in conflict with each other); *incommensurable* (and, therefore, they cannot always be measured against each other point-by-point); and *comparable* (capable of being compared with each other in multiple ways without requiring the assumption that there is or must always be a common, fixed grid by which we measure progress). (Bernstein 1983, 86)

These three features of rival paradigms, their (in)compatibility, (in)commensurability and (in)comparability, are not framed by Kuhn or Bernstein as three options for judging the potential for success in a comparative analysis. Instead, they are three levels at which comparison may or may not be possible within any comparative analysis. Rival paradigms are, simultaneously, logically in conflict (incompatible), unable to be reduced to each other (incommensurable), *and yet still* comparable, so long as fixity is not required. This is, for example, the sort of analysis Andrew Schaap (2011, 2012) can be said to be engaging in when he compares the political frameworks in the work of Rancière and Hannah Arendt, arguing that their concepts of politics should not be assimilated (2011, 38). The perspectives of Rancière and Arendt are incompatible, incommensurable, but not for all that, incomparable, or Schaap would not have been able to reason through their

similarities and differences. Rancière and Arendt, while both describing radical notions of politics, describe rival paradigms. This means that their theoretical approaches should not be combined because they are logically incompatible, but not that they cannot be discussed in relation to one another.

The political framework Cavarero employs in her work is heavily influenced by Arendt. Therefore it is questionable whether or not her concept of the unique existent is appropriate to pose as logically compatible with Rancière's logic of equality. In a 2002 article, Cavarero describes her view of politics at length and largely follows Arendt's (1958) thinking on this subject. Yet before concluding that this means she is subject to Schaap's (2011, 2012) critique that an Arendtian understanding of politics erases the potential for equality to contest the very question that is political for Rancière—who counts and how?—let us examine Cavarero's argument. She writes that where plural uniqueness is not placed in the foreground, there is no politics,

we can say with Arendt that wherever this plural uniqueness is not placed in the foreground (wherever it is not welcomed, respected, set down as a value of primary and inalienable importance) there is no politics. (Cavarero 2004, 62)

There are two ways of reading this quotation. The first is that, like Arendt, Cavarero pre-defines the proper sphere of politics *in general* and limits it to situations of plurality. This reading, following Schaap, would render Cavarero's concept of equality incoherent with Rancière's concept of equality for the purpose of reimagining the difficult pedagogical relation between equality and freedom.

Alternatively, it is possible—and in my view necessary—to read this quotation through Cavarero's critique of the universality claims of metaphysics. Reading thusly, Cavarero uses plural uniqueness strategically to create a stage upon which her *specific political intervention* can be deployed. Her ontological claim about the necessity of plurality can thus be read in light of her ontological "bad intentions" and the contestation she enacts. Linking plural uniqueness to the appearance of politics is thus not to claim a philosophical truth, but an active, egalitarian contestation of a specific and naturalized determination of who counts and how. Plurality is therefore the space for the active and specific contestation of freedom-as-uniqueness, rather than the universal prerequisite space for any active contestation of the political question of how the human is counted whatsoever. In line with this active and specific contestation, Cavarero describes the plural relation not

as being the proper field of politics, but rather as deciding that proper field (2004, 69). The plural relation in which the unique existent appears can therefore be read as *a* manifestation of politics, rather than the only manifestation. This reading corresponds to an understanding of Cavarero's concept of the unique existent as a specific and strategic contestation of the political question "who counts and how?" rather than as an essentialistic or universal statement that pre-defines the human and preemptively answers that question.

For Cavarero, uniqueness is an ontological condition contesting a specific definition of who and how one counts as human: the prioritization of the unique existent contests the hegemonic philosophical definition that equates the subject with a neutral, universal, interchangeable, disembodied individual. The unique existent is thus a contestation of a universal rather than a sincere institution of a universal (Cavarero 2004, 76). In discussing her theoretical perspective, Cavarero has put forth the idea that universality does not, in fact, exist (Cavarero and Bertolino 2008, 143). It seems that Cavarero is interested in a relational concept of uniqueness precisely in order to disassociate from identitarian fixations and to reopen the issue of how the question "who counts and how?" might be answered. In contrast to Emmanuel Levinas (1969), however, Cavarero's relational uniqueness necessarily involves concrete relations. Cavarero develops uniqueness not as a concept in which the originary Otherness of the other makes the singularity of the self possible, but as a concept in which anyone has the relational possibility of contesting their representation and *thereby* appearing as a unique existent.

Rancière's equality together with Cavarero's uniqueness, unlike the theories of Rancière and Arendt, can thus be understood as coherent with each other rather than logically incompatible. That is to say, they do not represent rival paradigms but rather radically different theoretical prioritizations that can still be understood as logically compatible. If Rancière's prioritization of equality and Cavarero's prioritization of the unique existent are compatible and comparable, they are not for all that commensurable. Their incommensurability is precisely a matter of their different conceptual prioritizations, which is not an opposition but a dissymmetry. The prioritization of the logic of equality in Rancière's work leads to a focus on particular questions, problems, and ways of framing issues, and these in turn generate his arguments and conclusions. The attentive consequences are parallel for the prioritization of the unique existent in Cavarero's work. Their

respective conceptual prioritizations lead them to lines of thinking that cannot be reduced or assimilated to one another. But, as Bernstein (1983, 93) writes in reference to rival paradigms, incommensurability does not make comparative exploration of concepts impossible: “incommensurability does not get in the way of understanding and comparing the concepts—it rather sets a challenge to us of finding out how to understand and compare them.” Bernstein’s judgment in favor of the possibility of comparison is an important reminder in two specific ways. As Bernstein rightly notes, the relevant focus is on the *concepts* under investigation, not the thinkers who elaborate those concepts. Thus, while I refer to Rancière and Cavarero in my research, what I seek to indicate in so doing is their respective prioritizations of equality and uniqueness. I do not seek to give either of them the role of paradigmatic representative. Second, if conceptual comparison remains possible between rival paradigms, it must be even more so in the face of the logical compatibility between Rancière’s prioritization of equality and Cavarero’s prioritization of uniqueness. The challenge is how to go about comparatively analyzing the conceptual logics of equality and uniqueness in terms of the difficult pedagogical relation between equality and freedom while respecting their incommensurable otherness.

Attending to Incommensurability: On the Style of Comparative Analysis

I part ways with Bernstein’s thinking on comparative analysis in terms of the hermeneutic goal he argues the social disciplines should seek to achieve in such analyses. He writes that,

plurality does not mean that we are limited to being separate individuals with irreducible subjective interests. Rather it means that we seek to discover some common ground to reconcile differences through debate, conversation, and dialogue. (Bernstein 1983, 223)

Bernstein ultimately subscribes to a pragmatic understanding of communication, arguing that the goal of comparative analysis and conversation is to discover common ground and reconcile differences. While common ground and reconciliation are very often useful goals in face-to-face and deliberative conversations, they place undue limits upon, at the very least, theoretical analysis. There is much of value that comparative analysis can generate without seeking common ground or the reconciliation of differences. The purpose of my complicated conversational method, ultimately, is not common ground but logical revelation. Analyzing equality and uniqueness in the context of their difficult pedagogical relation involves taking the difficulties of that relationship seriously. Complicated con-

versation explores the consequences of those difficulties rather than seeking to resolve them.

Yet while I differ from Bernstein in my analytical goal, I find his description of comparative analysis as a type of conversation helpful and pedagogically appropriate. Bernstein's description is helpful because while dialogue, with its ending *-logue* etymologically linked to the Greek *logos*, evokes the unity implied by discourse, conversation derives from the Latin *conversationem*, or the "act of living with," which to my mind appropriately evokes the inescapability of otherness in the pedagogical relation between equality and uniqueness (Harper 2013). Conversing between the two concepts is consistent with the organic development of my method; demanding, "what of the unique existent?" "what of equality?" served to force the logics of equality and uniqueness into conversation with one another. Maurice Blanchot, whose quotation about the otherness of the speaker opened this article, described conversation as defined by its intervallic interruptedness (1993, 75-6). And, as Ann Smock notes, unlike the reciprocity generally characteristic of dialogue, the intervallic relation of conversation is a relation of separation and difference rather than common ground (2003, 2-3). Conceptualizing the difficult pedagogical relation between equality and uniqueness in the form of a complicated conversation enables a focus not only on the meeting points and common ground between these two prioritizations, but also on the points where common meaning breaks down and the incommensurability between the logic of equality and the prioritization of the unique existent comes to the fore. Framing my analysis of the relation between these two terms as a complicated conversation thereby leaves room for, rather than stifling, the incommensurable otherness between them. "Complicated conversation" is also a pedagogically appropriate term because it alludes to curriculum, or the what rather than the how of pedagogy (Pinar 2012, 29-30). As I noted above, Sjöstrand considered the difficult relation between equality and freedom fundamental in informing the premises, purposes and possibilities of pedagogy; that is, not simply how to teach but what pedagogy could be understood to be and do. Because both deal at some level with what pedagogy is, it seems pedagogically appropriate to consider the interplay between equality and freedom-as-uniqueness in terms of a complicated conversation. The notion of complicated conversation as a form for comparative analysis is thereby an appropriate choice on three fronts: (a) it is consistent with a nuanced approach to comparative analysis seeking to leave room for incommensurable otherness, (b) it is consistent with the initial, organic development of my attempts to con-

sider the conceptual logics of equality and uniqueness together and at the same time, and (c) it appropriately links the comparative analysis to its role within pedagogy.

Complicated Conversation as Juxtaposition: Leaving Room for Incommensurable Otherness

There are many possible ways of placing disparate concepts into complicated conversation with each other. My comparative approach involves juxtaposing texts written by Rancière, which unfold the logical consequences of prioritizing equality, with texts written by Cavarero, which unfold the logical consequences of prioritizing uniqueness. Juxtaposition, as described by Roger Simon, is a method designed to evoke questions and insights, and to work against fetishization, or abstracted fixity, which can result in the stagnation of meaning (2006, 201). Brett Sutton echoes this description without framing the experience in psychoanalytic terms, describing juxtaposition as a process that can serve to “unfreeze” thinking” (1993, 425). These descriptions are consistent with my initial organic question-posing in order to move beyond being seduced by, and toward asking my own pedagogical questions of, Cavarero’s and Rancière’s texts. Simon, et al. describe the process of juxtaposition as involving a physical staging of disjunctive linkages which can impart surprise and instruction, and initiate thought (2000, 301-2). The notion of physically staging juxtapositions—that is, of making them explicit rather than hidden from the reader—has been influential in my own implementation of this approach. It has encouraged and informed my choice to formally construct complicated conversations highlighting the consequences of prioritizing equality and uniqueness, respectively. In addition, the concept of disjunctive linkage is consistent with my interest in bringing logical revelation rather than common ground into focus. A third reason for formally constructing complicated conversations for the reader is that the process of disjunctive linkage might in itself be instructive and thought-provoking beyond my analysis of it in terms of the premises, purposes and possibilities of pedagogy. The reader may find other surprises and have other thoughts evoked than those I focus on with my research questions and my analyses. Yet, in choosing an appropriate mode of juxtaposition, the need to respect the incommensurable otherness between Rancière’s prioritization of equality and Cavarero’s prioritization of uniqueness imposes a number of constraints which must be considered. Ignoring these constraints risks closing off the room I seek to leave for the incommensurability in and between these concepts.

Juxtaposition's disjunctive staging is useful because it deliberately seeks to interrupt a monological stance. Yet in attending to equality and uniqueness my goal is not to emphasize the fragmentation of the multiple. Rather than multiplicity, I specifically seek to leave space for the notion of *two*. Both Rancière (2001) and Cavarero (1993, 1991) focus on the importance of the meeting of *two*, rather than on multiplicity or pluralism. For Rancière, it is a matter of the meeting of two forms of logical argument—the logic of inequality and the logic of equality. For Cavarero, the importance of two is doubled. The two of sexual difference allows Cavarero (1992, 1995) to highlight both the erasure of uniqueness in the philosophical tradition, and to emphasize the embodied character of uniqueness. Additionally, it is in the lived, relational interaction between two that who each existent uniquely is most clearly manifests itself (Cavarero 2000). This manifestation is decidedly not a self-reflection or an aspect of the self which can be possessed in individual consciousness, but an aspect of the self which is expositive, and ineffable except in relation. It is the relation between two which creates space for the exploration of uniqueness.

Attending to the notion of two within Cavarero's work therefore imposes a second and related constraint, that of situating myself as researcher relationally rather than via self-reflection. Reflexivity, Sandra Harding writes, involves the explicit declaration of from what embedded contextual standpoints one lays claim to knowledge (1991, 143-151). Reflexivity becomes problematic in terms of my project because it places a demand upon me as researcher to declare myself in terms of what I am, that is, in terms of my representative belongings, thereby requiring both me as researcher and the reader of my complicated conversations to attend to my presence in the text precisely as what, rather than who, I articulate myself to be. Harding's approach, which she calls strong objectivity, focuses important attention on the complexity of pluralism and the need to be conscious of the role differences play for one's interpretive lens. While this attention is valuable, it, like any research approach, does not tell the full story. The risk in this articulation is that Harding's strong objectivity becomes strong *object-ivity*,² that is, that it may erase space for valuing or seeking to learn anything of (a) the researcher's position and (b) the research object beyond their describable, representative features. My concern is that this risks erasing the relational space for what I as researcher cannot possess of myself—that

² This is an unfortunate methodological consequence, because Harding's normative intention in calling for strong objectivity is to find ways to value and prioritize, rather than reduce and objectify, marginalized knowledges.

is, my own uniqueness—and that such erasure may also make me less attentive to the logical consequences of uniqueness I attempt to bring into focus in my current project. Thinking objectivity in terms of reflexivity is therefore inappropriate within the construction of complicated conversations.

A third constraint lies in Rancière's critique of the necessity of the expert to demystify the people (1991, 2004, 2011a). For Rancière, the notion that there are some who see and some who do not see and must therefore be told, negates the logic of equality. Thus, in choosing an appropriate mode of juxtaposition it is important that I avoid any assumption that I, in my role as researcher, have privileged access to uncover implicate orders or hidden structural constraints on agency and subjectivity. I telegraphed this constraint above when I highlighted that the complicated conversations might evoke other surprises, insights and analyses on the part of the reader than those I myself raise. Equality, as Rancière conceptualizes it, is not hidden but dormant, and can potentially be verified at any time by anyone. It is not a structural constraint but the condition of possibility for the structuring of society. Similarly, in Cavarero's conceptualization, relational uniqueness is not hidden but ignored. It can be given more or less space, be deprioritized and erased, but its appearance is a relational phenomenon rather than a structural one. This constraint also leads me to focus my analyses of the complicated conversations not on structural issues of what affects human action, but on who acts and how.

Finally, a fourth constraint in choosing an appropriate mode of juxtaposition is Cavarero's (2005) critique of the prioritization of the visual field within philosophy. Cavarero explicitly seeks to avoid reducing the possibility of attention to a question of the visible. This is not to say that the visible field is not relevant, but that it always tends toward an objectification which ignores, if not erases, uniqueness (cf. Havis, 2009). Thus any methodological approach which overtly prioritizes a visual framework unduly risks ignoring and erasing space for the exploration of uniqueness, thereby hindering my own efforts to consider the logical consequences of uniqueness in juxtaposition with those of equality. Respecting this constraint, I seek to evoke a broader aesthetic framework not limited to the visual field. While working with text and the landscape of the written page necessarily involves a visual framework, this constraint leads me to emphasize the literariness and physical aspects of that form, as well as the sonorous potential—both oral and aural—contained in the idea of complicated conversation itself. This choice is motivated

by respect for Cavarero's prioritization of uniqueness, but it is not inconsistent with the way prioritizing equality leads Rancière to discuss the sensible (Rancière 1989, 2004). In other words, I leave space for reading Rancière's (1999, 2011b) interest in noise and metaphor as an opening for considering equality as having consequences which, *pace* some readings of Rancière, exceed the visual field (Panagia 2010; Chambers 2012, 95; cf. Rancière 1995, 51).

Together, these four constraints lead me to turn away from certain approaches to juxtaposition such as montage (Bernstein 2012; Trahair 2012), diffraction (Barad 2007; Haraway 1994; Hultman and Lenz Taguchi 2010), and, as it has been developed within the field of education, bricolage (Denzin and Lincoln 2005; Kincheloe 2005). Instead, I develop the complicated conversation between equality and uniqueness as a logical juxtaposition. As Patti Lather describes juxtaposition, it involves the foregrounding of the assumptions at work in prioritizing and thinking through the framework of a particular theoretical prism (1992, 95). Throughout this article, I have emphasized my concern with these assumptions (and the arguments these assumptions motivate) as the *logic* or logical consequences of prioritizing, for Rancière, equality and, for Cavarero, uniqueness. My method of complicated conversation seeks to explore the logical consequences for pedagogy of the difficult relation between these concepts. It is through this exploration that I am able to consider what the interplay between these specific ways of framing equality and freedom-as-uniqueness means for how the premises, purposes and possibilities of pedagogy are conceived. Lather describes her understanding of creating juxtapositions as "a creative collision of incommensurable voices that do not map onto one another," which is precisely my intention in constructing complicated conversations between the works of Rancière and Cavarero (*ibid.*).

Equality and Uniqueness, and Rancière and Cavarero, in Complicated Conversation: Attending to Otherness

Thinking through the logical consequences of equality and uniqueness, respectively, makes certain demands on what it is possible to think in general and on what it is possible to think about pedagogy, specifically. Constructing complicated conversations brings these logical consequences into focus by examining the arguments motivated by prioritizing equality and uniqueness, respectively, and interrupts these arguments by forcing them to disjunctively coexist. I use the word "force" to describe the process of juxtaposition not

because I seek to do harm to, disrespect or misrepresent the arguments made by Rancière and Cavarero, but because disconnecting their words from their original contexts is unavoidably to perform a violence to the rhetorical form of those arguments. This violence is actually the point of juxtaposing their arguments—it is through this disruption of their rhetoric that I am able to delve more deeply into, and pose my own questions to, their logical frameworks. It is precisely the logical consequences of prioritizing equality and uniqueness, and of their interrelation, that I want to bring into focus through the juxtaposition of their texts.

At the same time, it is important not to forget that *someone* has articulated all of these words and made all of these arguments—and that I am *someone* else making choices about how to interrupt, juxtapose and then analyze them. Someone else may have made a different argument, chosen another route, engaged in another analysis. The existence of each of these someones is relevant, and therefore I have focused on one thinker and one iteration for each of the two underlying concepts in democracy's pedagogical problem, so as not to create an amalgamation that erases the singularity of the scholars who think through and articulate, and interrupt, these logical arguments.

Yet I steal Cavarero's and Rancière's words, at least partially, from their contexts and force them into conversations neither scholar intended nor may want. I feel justified in doing so because this is also a practice that Cavarero (1995, 2002) engages in in order to create space for unique existents. Rancière (1994, 1999), too, argues that dislocation is an important aspect of equality, though he is commenting on what equality does, rather than describing a technique he employs in his writing. Nevertheless, the act of stealing Rancière's words from the context in which he places them is an undertaking of my own dislocation. By interrupting the seductiveness of his writing, I seek to explore and verify what can be done in the name of my own research questions; or, to use Rancière's phrase, I understand juxtaposition as a way to rave reasonably (1991, 91).

Juxtaposition, both because it steals text from its original context and because I frame it as a process for raving reasonably, raises the question of where I, as researcher, am in relation to my research. I construct the complicated conversations, though I am not the author of the words that are uttered. In these conversations and in my analysis of them, I deliberately refer to Rancière and Cavarero as if they were intentional and agentic speak-

ers in my text—and not simply in the texts I have stolen from them—without actively declaring my own presence and perspective. My intention in this referencing is not that either Rancière or Cavarero should stand as a symbol for philosophy, politics, feminism, universalism, or any other paradigm, but I do pose them as the representative of the argumentative logic that underlies each of their specific oeuvres. I do hold Rancière accountable for prioritizing equality and the logical arguments he makes—as well as how he makes them—as a consequence of that prioritization. And I do hold Cavarero accountable for prioritizing uniqueness and the logical arguments she makes—as well as how she makes them—as a consequence of that prioritization. Importantly, holding Rancière and Cavarero accountable involves trust. Discussing Cavarero’s *Relating Narratives* (2000), Robin Ward (2010) critiques Cavarero for disappearing in her own text. Her narrative becomes “increasingly un-self reflective” and, while Cavarero criticizes philosophy for leaving behind no life story, Ward remarks that “we know almost nothing of Cavarero” (Ward 2010, 85-8; Cavarero 2000, 9). If instead of following this line of critique, I trust in the thoroughness of Cavarero’s strategic approach in prioritizing uniqueness, how then might her apparent anonymity in her text be informative to how I might consider my own relation, as researcher, to the complicated conversations I construct and analyze?

Rancière, who does not make himself any more actively present in his texts than Cavarero (and even goes so far as to refer to himself in the third person when commenting on his method), suggests that trust is foundational for the logic of equality (Rancière 2009; 1995, 51-2; 2011c). Therefore, out of respect for both the logic of equality and the logic of uniqueness, I trust that Cavarero’s un-self-reflective writing style and apparent repetition of the generalizing anonymity of the philosopher is a strategic move *for* uniqueness and consider what that strategy achieves. By refusing to self-define, describe and locate herself *for* the reader in her own texts, I read Cavarero as making two negative moves and one positive move. First, she seeks to avoid focusing her own or the reader’s attention on what her circumstances are and thereby negating the attentive priority given to who she and her narratable subjects in the text uniquely are. Second, she seeks to avoid fixing her relation with the reader before it has even begun, which would erase space for the shared narrative scene (Cavarero 2000, 92). Third, Cavarero’s framing of uniqueness as universal is not a declaration of an ontological truth, but, in line with her ironic use of ontology, an invitation to the reader to test the premises of the unique existent him- or herself, and thereby to prioritize uniqueness and seek it out (*ibid.*, 89; cf. 2005, 175). In other words,

Cavarero's apparent textual anonymity can be understood as an intentional aspect of her strategy to prioritize unique, embodied, lived existence. Thus while the anonymity of her writing may *appear to resemble* a universal voice from nowhere, common in the discipline of philosophy but criticized by Cavarero herself, it is also possible to trust that her lack of self-description in her role as scholar is something quite different than a blindness within her work. Reading Cavarero's writing style via her prioritization of the unique existent shifts how one might read her textual, tonal and perspectival choices; those choices can be read as a response to the demands placed by the logic of uniqueness itself. Her choices might be considered as a way, not to make herself-as-researcher invisible, but to avoid erasing space for the unique existent to be explored and to make his or her appearance.

In my view, the logical demands placed by prioritizing uniqueness are zero-sum in only one direction. To abrogate them myself in my role as researcher would deprioritize uniqueness from the outset. But respecting the demand to leave space for the unique existent to be explored and make his or her appearance does not prioritize the logic of uniqueness over, or otherwise negate, attention to Rancière's concept of equality. Instead, Rancière's (1995) argument for trust in the common, egalitarian capacity of anyone and everyone can be read as encouraging reading for the speech—the logic, the strategic sense, the argument—being made where one might otherwise simply read noise (that is, something to criticize and disregard) in Cavarero's approach. It is by taking this trust into account that considering Cavarero's strategy as sensical becomes important. Therefore, to take Cavarero's strategy seriously and explore what can be done through it is simultaneously coherent with the prioritization of equality and the prioritization of uniqueness. Adopting Cavarero's approach as my own, in order to avoid deprioritizing uniqueness from the start, is a research approach and a writing style that takes Rancièrian equality seriously as well, and thus this choice is consistent with the internal logic of my research terms.

I have chosen the place, order, and attention given to all the words in my research, even if some are attributed to and written by others. I am neither absent from, anonymous in nor unencumbered by that process. In these choices and their consequences the reader can seek what my perspective is, and surely find answers. The reader may also find traces of who I uniquely am that I have unavoidably exposed and discover that *I*, not a universaliz-

ing taker of a perspective from nowhere, am writing. As this description makes apparent, and broadly consistent with philosophical writing in general, the objectivity of the complicated conversational method lies in the stringency of and coherence with which I respect and properly represent the logic of my sources and with which I make my argument. This is not a retreat to objectivism but a deliberate strategy intended to open for fully considering my research questions.

Constructing Complicated Conversations

If logical juxtaposition is my methodological mode for bringing the logics of equality and uniqueness, and their interrelation, into focus while interrupting them, the question is what this process practically entails as I construct a complicated conversation. The process of logical juxtaposition involves several layers and sequences of close reading and textual analysis. Upon reading Rancière's and Cavarero's bodies of work for the logic of equality and the prioritization of uniqueness, I noticed various themes and settings that both seemed to address, albeit in different ways. Various Aesop's fables, aspects of Greek mythology, selections from Plato, Aristotle, Arendt, Habermas, Agamben, Nancy, and so forth, provided settings that, along with many other thinkers, both Rancière and Cavarero have taken up, analyzed and discussed.

Along with these settings, I noticed that there were certain overarching themes of concern in connection with those settings.³ These themes, as framed by the prioritization of equality in comparison with the prioritization of uniqueness, are not necessarily resonant with each other, but the *settings* still provide a common jumping off point, or object, for conversation.

³ Sometimes, but not always, the comparison of themes leads me to notice the common settings. That is to say that there is some chronological flexibility in this description.

An Example of a Common Setting

Rancière, in the thick of a description of the worker's movement, applies the specific figure of Thales to make an abstract distinction, writing,

[t]he ideologue is not a person of leisure, the heavenly dreamer who falls into a well while looking up at the stars. He is someone who toils, a drudge who—like Proudhon, the modern Hippias: typographer, riverboat clerk, philologist, economist, and philosopher—tries painfully to raise scaffolding between the earth of work and the heaven of science. This backward fellow truly does not see that we are no longer living in the days of Thales, that truth no longer dwells in heaven. It is here on earth where it is only a matter of observing, but where no one sees. (Rancière 2004, 75)

Cavarero, for her part, returns to the scene recounted in Plato's *Theaetetus* and to the relational specificity of the interaction. In so doing, she makes sure to point out with a footnote that nothing tragic happened to Thales, he merely took an unexpected bath (Cavarero 1995, 123):

[w]hile looking up at the sky and scrutinizing the stars, Thales fell into a well. Then a quick and graceful maidservant from Thrace laughed and told him that he was far too eager to find out about everything in the heavens, while the things around him, at his feet, were hidden from his eyes. (Cavarero 1995, 31; quoting Plato's *Theaetetus* 174a)

I could choose from a number of settings, and this part of the process was somewhat organic. I focused on settings that both authors used to make significant points within the logic of their conceptual prioritization. But what has ultimately motivated my choices is that in relation to each setting, Rancière and Cavarero argue in a way I find relevant for and important to reimagining pedagogy's premises, purposes and possibilities. In considering this relevance, I have posed three guiding questions to my chosen settings and their themes:

1. What is it about equality (for Rancière's texts) or uniqueness (for Cavarero's texts) that leads this thinker down this argumentative path? Here I consider the argumentative path as a consequence of thinking through the logic of equality or uniqueness, respectively.
2. What of equality (for Cavarero's texts) or where can the unique existent be (for Rancière's texts)?
3. How does the relation between these prioritizations reimagine the conceptualization of pedagogy's premises, purposes and possibilities?

Upon choosing a setting, I engage in a close rereading of the text(s) in which that setting unfolds. While the *theme* the authors address may also be addressed elsewhere, I cut away those discussions that do not raise or allude to the setting. Thus the choice of setting serves as my initial means of excluding the possible pathways of the complicated conversation. This means that I primarily focus the construction of each complicated conversation around a single text by each author, though, where the author's comments elsewhere bear directly on the setting, e.g. in interviews or response articles, I have brought those texts into the realm of conversational possibility as well.

Having chosen the setting and the texts, I then begin the "stealing" phase of the juxtaposition process. I transcribe quotations that describe, implicate and develop the core of the argumentative path that arises via the prioritization of equality and uniqueness, respectively. In so doing, I break up the text, separating quotations into single sentences or, at most, single paragraphs. Each of these quotations are labeled and referenced. This results in hundreds of quotations. In this stealing process, I begin to exclude tangents that discuss the theme but do not rest in the setting—much the way I, in real-life conversations, might sift between what it is possible to say, and what it makes sense to say in light of the particular context (whereas that real-life process is fairly instantaneous the same cannot be said in relation to the method of juxtaposition). In so doing, I shift the setting from a rhetorical tool or example to further an argument related to equality or uniqueness, as it is originally used by Rancière and Cavarero, into the motivation for the complicated conversation. This shift helps me to consider arguments that are made as a logical consequence of prioritizing either equality or uniqueness, versus what might be considered rhetorical or stylistic moves in the text. My aim is to focus on the logical consequences, rather than the rhetorical moves.

I repeatedly read these disjointed quotations, examining the directions the logical arguments take, listening to them out of order, seeking openings that connect one argument to another—all the while starting from the point of view of the setting for the complicated conversation. At this point, my primary attention is to the first of my guiding questions, though question three is active in the background.

Then I step back and begin to compare what Rancière and Cavarero are trying to say, and how. Here the second of my guiding questions comes into play. I consider what fits to-

gether conversationally: not how Cavarero and Rancière agree but how they respond and react, in their own text, to the ideas presented in the other. I imagine their voices and their argumentative paths in my head, talking alongside and aligning their comments. I do not, however, put words in their mouths. Only what Rancière and Cavarero have actually written do I compile into the complicated conversation. This process leads, in the end, to analyses that do not leave space for all the aspects of Rancière's and Cavarero's writing that I could or would like to address, but instead focus on what comes into the foreground when the logical consequences of their prioritizations of equality and uniqueness are juxtaposed. In other words, constructing the complicated conversations involves a repeated process of scaling back to illuminate the minimum that must be said in prioritizing equality or uniqueness in relation to the given conversational setting. This process of disjunctive linkage, arranging their quotations in response and reaction to each other, continues until Rancière's and Cavarero's positions either diverge so much that I⁴ can no longer frame them, even disjunctively, in the context of the complicated conversation *and* the major points of each thinker's argumentative path has been embedded in the logic of the conversation. This does not mean that everything has been said, but rather that, as I read the logical consequences of prioritizing equality and uniqueness in the source quotations, those consequences have not been misrepresented or silenced due to a neglect on my part to include them in the conversation.

A Snippet of Conversation

The moment when pure thought reserves for itself the pronouncement of truth is also the moment that heralds and institutes the drastic distinction between the source of thought and the source of sensory experience The proposition 'being is and not-being is not' is constructed by pure logic. It is then assumed as a true principle from which consequences can be consistently drawn. (Cavarero 1995, 42)

Philosophy cannot justify itself as a post within the division of labor; if it did so, it would fall back into the democracy of trades. Hence it must exacerbate the argument from nature, giving it the shape of a prohibition marked on bodies . . . there simply are bodies that cannot accommodate philosophy—bodies marked and stigmatized by the servitude of the work *for which* they have been made. (Rancière 2004, 32)

It hardly matters if these consequences lead to a denial of the evidence of sensory experience. In fact, if the logic of pure, disembodied thought is *the* criterion of truth, whatever conflicts with this logic can only be false, which is to say 'apparent,' only in the sense of 'seeming' or unworthy of belief. (Cavarero 1995, 42; emphasis in original)

Here Plato broadcasts what he does not allow himself to say elsewhere: manual labor is a servile labor It is for the sake of the philosopher, not the city, that one must postulate a radical break between the order of leisure and the order of servile labor. (Rancière 2004, 32-3)

⁴ This is of course limited by my own ability to converse and to think conversationally. Others' results may vary.

Upon constructing the complicated conversation, I give my attention more fully to my third guiding question, which I use to analyze the conversation. This guiding question has been on my mind throughout the juxtaposition process, but this is the point at which it becomes my primary lens for analyzing and discussing what the complicated conversation illuminates regarding pedagogy's premises, purposes and possibilities.

What I read and analyze via these logical juxtapositions may not be what everyone reads in the texts or in Rancière's prioritization of equality and Cavarero's prioritization of uniqueness. I do not claim that my perspective is universal, or complete. At the same time, I do not claim to be making a privileged analysis, that is, an analysis that someone else could *not* see. My choice of iterations and the thinkers who represent those iterations of equality and freedom impacts the conclusions I draw. Other iterations may have led me to reach different conclusions regarding what this juxtaposition of terms means for reimagining the difficult pedagogical relation between equality and freedom. Thus here too my results will not be universal in the sense that they are not generalizable to all iterations that democracy's pedagogical problem might bring into play. Nor has such universalism ever been my intention. Rather, the method of complicated conversation deals with leaving room for incommensurable otherness within *a* specific reconsideration of democracy's pedagogical problem, or what the difficult but fundamental relation between equality and uniqueness means for how pedagogy is conceptualized.

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