Ignorant Teachers, Ignorant Students: Jacotot and Rancière in the Art School

This is an interesting moment in education generally and, for the purposes of this essay, art education in particular. We are living and working through a period increasingly dominated by the concepts of 'knowledge transfer' or 'knowledge exchange' within a mass education system that attracts a student body characterised by extraordinary *ignorance*. Quite apart from the fact that on many areas of art education the heaviest work load falls upon those responsible for study skills support (a different issue), there is an acceptance among a substantial number of teachers that a very large proportion of new (and not so new) undergraduate students are alarmingly ill-informed as regards not only what might, perhaps tendentiously, be called 'general knowledge', but also their own specific practice. Having spent two days recently interviewing prospective Degree students, a colleague remarked that many of them were quite knowledgeable but that this knowledge was 'implicit' rather than 'explicit'. This is an interesting observation, but for those with an axe to grind, the countless examples of practitioners gaining places on courses who seem to know virtually nothing about the history of their practice, current developments in contemporary practice, past and present modes of analysis and interpretation of their practice, and so on, render such knowledge very implicit indeed! For those responsible for providing the historical and theoretical component of practice-led courses such a situation can cause some discomfort, not least because the accusing fingers of studio staff all too frequently point in the direction of 'the theorists' who, it seems, continually fail to reverse this ground swell of ignorance. Often, one suspects, such an accusatory response deflects attention away from the often not insignificant gaps in their *own* knowledge. This might sound like a provocation but it is in fact intended as a mark of affection and solidarity. Ignorance does not (or should not) stop one from being a teacher, indeed a proper understanding of ignorance might make one a very good teacher indeed: the subject of this essay.

Knowledgeable Ignorance

It is worth reflecting on Socratic ignorance for a moment, particularly as it relates to Socrates's his famous critique of art in Book X of *The Republic*. Clearly for him, there is good and bad ignorance, one might call them knowledgeable ignorance and ignorant ignorance respectively. Knowledgeable ignorance is described as a form of wisdom, but it is one rooted in the acceptance of a God-figure that uniquely embodies the power of knowledge denied to us mere mortals. To be wise is to give up the quest for knowledge and, thus, to deny the pedagogical task associated with such a quest. This is not the end but the *transformation* of teaching, one that effectively places the *value* of pedagogy outside of itself: the philosophical root of 'knowledge exchange', derived from the ascendant God of Plato but destined for the mundanity of the marketplace. Art education, forever tormented, indeed terrorised by an outside that thinks education is only useful to the extent that it is useful to this outside, has a very long history indeed.

Ignorant Ignorance

The ignorant ignorance of the artist functions on three main levels.

Firstly, it is ignorant of the truth that it itself obscures. While the re-productive aspect of mimetic art is Socrates's main target, he goes further and accuses art of actually *producing* ignorance by distracting the truth-seekers from their goal, the knowledge of their ignorance. It does this through dubious forms of aesthetic seduction, pleasure and bewitchment: the sophistry of re-presentation passing itself off as truth.

Secondly, the ignorant ignorance of the artist is an ignorance not only of the truth outside of art, but of the nature of art itself, of its own origin. Where does the artwork come from? How does it come about? What does it mean? These are questions the artist is incapable of answering satisfactorily. Thus is exposed an ignorance of the work and of the self to compound the ignorance of God. Socrates describes this unknowing knowingness of creative aesthetic practice as a form of madness or frenzy. Since romanticism, but with increasing embarrassment, we might describe this as 'inspiration'. Andy Warhol's ability to encourage interviewers to answer their own questions for him, or to simply answer himself with an incoherent grunt represents the postmodern version of this same 'madness'.

Thirdly, a consequence of ignorance is the unwitting exceeding of limits. The incontrovertible and yet inscrutable know-how of the ignorant artist creates the illusion of a power of knowledge that can be imported into and exercised within domains beyond the expertise of the ignorant one. This, for Socrates, is the sophistical and rhetorical dimension of all art, and for us, perhaps, the aesthetic dimension of politics!

In addition to the more general problem of ignorance, one that can be largely rectified by instruction and information (education), there is then this deeper problem of ignorant ignorance, one that, if taken seriously, raises some questions about the appropriateness of 'knowledge exchange' as a model within art education. While it is obvious that art*works* have an exchange value within the economy of the art market, what value does the creative practitioner have within an economy where *knowledge* is the determinant principle?

Employability

Answers to this question are increasingly framed by the concept of 'employability', the client-led offspring of 'knowledge exchange'. And this concept should not be misunderstood. The issue here is not simply the *employment* of particular creative or practical abilities within a wider context than academia alone, what used to be called 'transferable skills', where the underlying notion of transference assumes the possibility of a generosity foreign to the calculated and calculating logic of knowledge *exchange*. The assumption now is that not only should those leaving art education have knowledges and skills that satisfy the requirements of particular *employers* but also, more ontologically one might say, that such knowledges only take on value to the extent that they can be imported into an assumed community of infinite augmentation that valorises

dialogue above the silent incomprehensibility of the aesthetic: a cultural desire to always reduce otherness to the same.

It is within this context that I would like to re-consider the ignorance of the artist, not as a way of resisting the irresistible march of 'knowledge exchange' so much as trying to find a place for ignorance within it—a richer model of exchange. In order to do this it will be necessary first to sketch out some of the ways in which art education has itself responded to the ignorance of art, increasingly in the name of 'employability', before suggesting, with the help of Jacques Rancière, another pedagogical model, one actually rooted in the concept of ignorance.

I will begin by looking again at the three forms of ignorant ignorance listed above, recognising that for Plato it is the aesthetic process of mimesis that, in the production of degraded copies of the originary Idea, degrades our experience of the truth, and corrupts by seducing us with fascinating images. For the sake of brevity, one might restrict our discussion to what might loosely be called a 'modern' and a 'postmodern' response to this, the problem of mimesis, both of which are in evidence in art education, and both of which have something to contribute to the existing model of 'knowledge exchange'.

The Modern.

During the modern period the mimetic model of art with its entanglement in the aesthetic acts of re-presentation and re-production, was increasingly replaced with an autonomous model that placed the emphasis on the *productive* values of creation rather than revelation, and the forging of aesthetic experiences that were 'felt' and exchanged as a form of 'knowing' to compete with rational knowledge. Where mimeticism's truth claim was harnessed to a notion of true-likeness that was contaminated from the outset with the degradation associated with copying and imitation, non-representational art worked instead with a different concept of truth articulated variously as 'truth to oneself', 'truth to materials' or 'truth to a concept'. Regardless of the mystification of art and the artist that resulted, it is noticeable that, for all of its apparent radicality, such a transformation of the aesthetic task is still unable to do without a collection of 'truths' that effectively legitimate not only the figure of the artist but also those employed to decipher such 'truths' in a language (usually academic) deployed to underpin the exchange value of art outside of the aesthetic domain.

The Postmodern.

The postmodern response to the problem of ignorance within an economy of the sign where everything is re-presentation—the precession of simulacra; the loss of the real…etc…etc…is to embrace it without shame. To be postmodern is no longer to feel guilt in the face of our ignorance. For Socrates, art produces ignorance by opening up a space between truth and error, a dark shadowy space that must be escaped if knowledge is to be achieved. Today the logic of postmodernism would allow us to think of this space differently, as a place of erring rather than error, a place to be inhabited through a constant movement that accepts ignorance as the necessary consequence of a mimetic

process that acknowledges its own contingency, arbitrariness and localised value. Within such a space knowledge is no longer tied to Truth, but is wedded, rather, to the productive use of ignorance within a rhetorical network driven by the will-to-power. As such, *knowingness* replaces knowledge and an ironic reflexivity replaces authenticity as the mark of the artist. As Socrates recognised from the outset, the authentic pursuit of knowledge, or at least the knowledge of our ignorance (wisdom), does not require the presence of a teacher, whereas the knowingness he associates with all forms of sophism, including art, is something teachable. One can be taught to master the mimetic arts, that is to say, one can be instructed in the identification and utilisation of the rhetorical structures necessary to be persuasive. Socrates famously refused to call himself a teacher but I imagine many of us who teach, especially within the context of a postmodern culture, would acknowledge that there is a sophistical dimension to what we do, one that in fact fits very well with the current model of 'knowledge exchange'. For example, the endless contextualisation and re-contextualisation of the artwork (historical, theoretical, industrial, geographical…), the central mission of art education apparently, engages in a form of mapping that has less to do with where and who we are than it does with where we could go and who we're not. Contexts do not add to our knowledge so much as remind us that any context can be exchanged for any other, and that any 'truths' that a particular context seems to offer is dependent upon an ignorance of other contexts that engenders the interminable process of 'deterritorialisation' that has made Deleuze so popular among art students. Thought along these lines, the pluralisation of knowledge(s) presupposed by the concept of 'knowledge exchange' has less to do with the compartmentalisation associated with a culture of the 'expert' and more to do with the recognition of our mutual ignorance in the face of the shattering of all universals.

There can also be detected a modern and postmodern response to Socrates second charge that art is ignorant of its own origins. There is ambivalence in Socrates attitude to what he calls the 'divine madness' of the artist depending on whether he places emphasis on the divinity or the madness. What is clear however is that it is only to the extent that the origin of art is identified as being *outside* of art and the artist in the divine truth of the Idea can the aesthetic be accepted.

Romanticism to Modernism

Throughout the modern period from Romanticism onwards the interiority of the individual artist increasingly became the locus of the inscrutability of inspiration. The ignorance of the artist was now translated into a set of concepts that came to dominate both art practice and education: inspiration, originality, the aleatoric, the automatic, shock, astonishment…etc. Rendering art pretty much unteachable, ignorance here reduced art education to the celebration of inspired genius's—the canon—or, more recently as the provision of a suitable context and climate for the ignorance of the artist to be protected, carefully nurtured and rendered productive: a programme of study that inspires and excites rather than instructs; the de-emphasis of skills acquisition in favour of experimentation and infinite critical reflection; an increasing emphasis on 'self-direction', negotiation and choice, rooted in the model of autonomous art already mentioned. And it is worth remembering that, in spite of the profound entanglement of

‘employability’ and the ‘skillification’ of education, the valorisation of innovation, of self-direction, of ‘imagineering’; risk and chancing-it in the culture industries and industry as a whole sits well alongside an education system that plays its part in the mystification of the artist as magician. Perhaps we are dealing with a type of skilful ignorance, one that undoubtedly has an exchange value within the economy of ‘knowledge exchange’.

Where, to coin Erich Heller’s phrase, the modern artist embarked upon a ‘journey into the interior’, exteriority is the hallmark of the postmodern. In a spiralling movement of increasing heteronomy, it is now language that speaks the subject/artist, language that becomes reified into specific discourses, discourses that become reified as institutions, institutions that become reified as nature, the ‘real’, Truth…and so on. The alterity of art within postmodernism is no longer approached via a ‘theology of depth’ as Baudrillard described it but by the infinite explication of texts stretched out across the surface of an absence that is irreducible to any origin other than, perhaps, Derrida’s paradoxical concept of the ‘originary trace’. This gives us teachers a lot to do, not least because the texts that explain these texts require further texts to explain them, and thus the alterity of art, and the ignorance associated with it, gives birth to a regime of ‘reading’ where the master explicator helps the ignorant artist become aware of the textual origin of their ignorance and transforms them into ‘reflective’ beings. To be initiated into the art of reflection within a textual regime of absence is absolutely perfect for the cultural industries as they currently exist…the greater the sense of vacuity the better!

Socrates’s final variant of ignorance is one that he is particularly unhappy with. The fact that the artist is, for whatever reason, able to produce work of extraordinary power creates, perhaps unsurprisingly, the impression (or illusion) that aesthetic practice authorises interventions into other areas of human endeavour and expertise. This is particularly interesting when one considers that the nature of ‘university education’ requires the student to demonstrate a degree of knowledge and expertise *beyond* the often narrow parameters of their chosen practice. Obviously, part of my role as a teacher is to ensure that this exceeding of the limits of creative practice is only embarked upon in the full (or at least partial) knowledge of the discourses that are being inhabited at any one time. But, to be brutally honest, another (unspoken) aspect of my job is to gently remind so many extraordinarily talented practitioners that they are only too capable of talking utter nonsense when they use their practice to propel them into foreign domains. But it is one thing to be told that you are talking rubbish—that can be educationally challenging—and another to situate the artist ever more firmly within the circumscribed territory of their ‘profession’. As it happens, and has transpired, one method of curbing aesthetic transgression into forbidden worlds is to establish a model of ‘professional practice’ that codifies the manner in which the artist can (so it is said) most effectively inhabit both the aesthetic and the non-aesthetic world. Professional practice can, of course, only be taught by professionals—those in the know—which in its cosy compartmentalisation of art practice neatly slots into a model of ‘knowledge exchange’ that can only operate from within a pact of non-transgression. It is precisely the limitation of art to is own ‘knowledge’ base that brings the structure of exchange into existence. The ignorant artist, oblivious to the limitations on what can and cannot be done, can or cannot be said, has no

need to enter into dialogue with others from within the cramped universe of their own expertise, not, that is, unless they want support from any one of the many funding bodies.

To summarise: the above sketch aims simply to suggest that, while there is clearly a tension between the increasing domination of 'knowledge exchange' within a mass educational environment that is engaged in a day-to-day struggle with ignorance, the radicalisation of this ignorance within an art school setting that is not only ill-informed but, one might say, ontologically at odds with the economy of knowledge highlights the extent to which such a tension can and is rendered productive. This is why, contrary to what many thought, the 'profession' of the artist and the mission statements of the knowledge exchangers fit rather well together.

The Ignorant Schoolmaster

Thankfully, however, one can radicalise both ignorance and teaching a little further and in such a way that the teacher, instead of combating ignorance through a range of pedagogical strategies, also shares in the ignorance, thus radically transforming the role of the teacher and, indeed, the role of the practitioner. With the help of Jacques Rancière's extraordinary account of Joseph Jacotot's 'panecastic' teaching (an 'intellectual adventure' as Rancière describes it, begun in Belgium in the early 19th Century), this will allow a conclusion of sorts to reached.

Rancière's account can be found in his fascinating book *The Ignorant Schoolmaster: Five Lessons in Intellectual Emancipation* (1991). This is a very rich work so I can only flag up some main points that are relevant to the present discussion, but just to say at the outset that the intellectual adventure begins with Jacotot having to teach Flemish-speaking Belgians how to speak French when he himself spoke no Flemish. His strategy was to find a bi-lingual text and to set his students to work translating from their own language into another, through trial and error, improvisation, work and attention. The results were as effective as being taught by a knowledgeable schoolmaster.

To begin with, as Rancière (following Jacotot) acknowledges, the 'ignorant schoolmaster' does resemble the figure of Socrates to the extent that ignorance is admitted, but contrary to appearances, this is not a Socratic method. The crucial difference is that, as we have seen, Socrates distinguishes between one form of ignorance and another, which is a surreptitious way of distinguishing between knowledge and ignorance. It is this inequality that allows him to, as Rancière describes it, lead the ignorant by the nose: his 'teaching smelled of the bridle'. (Rancière, 1991, p. 17) It is this inequality that allows a form of knowledge exchange to take place: philosophy bringing art to a knowledge of its ignorance/art allowing philosophy the opportunity to affirm its superiority and authority. What attracts Rancière to Jacotot's teaching is that it is founded upon an *equality* of ignorance.

Explication and Stultification

Instead of assuming that the pedagogical situation contains at least two intelligences—the teacher's and the student's—one superior to the other, this model of teaching recognises only one: the text (of which both teacher and student are ignorant). The distance between teacher and student—one assumed to be essential to the pedagogical situation—is normally *reduced* through the teacher's explication of the text, whether the text be the student's own work of which they are ignorant, or the plurality of texts marshalled by the teacher to contextualise that work, thus explaining it. Either way, the silence of mutual ignorance is shattered by the noise of the explicator's art and the distance is reduced or destroyed by the master's voice: the explicator fills up the distance with words. Teaching cannot tolerate silence. Jacotot's teaching method (which he described as 'emancipatory') is more like friendship, and friendship does not reduce the distance between people, it brings that distance to life. Perhaps this is the primary responsibility of the teacher, not the reduction but the vivification of distance. But how would this work in practice?

Obviously, one might have some very real misgivings about the expansion of the 'panecastic' method—would we really want to be operated on by an ignorant surgeon? But, that said, it does nevertheless offer some real insights into important aspects of art education that are in danger of being ignored or destroyed in the pursuit of knowledge and the valorisation of exchange. Foremost among these is the idea of adventure.

Education as an 'intellectual adventure'

In a world of Powerpoint presentations, where everything is already up on screen before it is spoken, where everything has to be seen (preferably in advance) as well as heard, what happens to adventure? In a world dominated by endlessly refined and reworked aims, objectives and learning outcomes, a world of course documentation so comprehensive and all-inclusive that the student is never in danger of confronting the outside (the other side), what happens to adventure? Adventure requires ignorance not knowledge. Once locked into an exchange mechanism, the pursuit of knowledge never leaves the all-too-familiar hustle and bustle of the marketplace. Adventures are precisely about not knowing, about having nothing to exchange that would hold the intellect in place within the knowledge economy, a form of epistemological poverty and hunger that concentrates the mind and propels it outside of itself, not towards the goals set by the master explicators but out into the infinite detours of intellectual discovery. To be adventurous is precisely not to arrive but, rather, to *witness the arrival* of the unexpected and the unpredictable.

Now is a time when the increasing dominance of 'knowledge exchange' drives researchers out in search of joint-ventures rather than ad-ventures; a time when, as a consequence, the adventure is replaced by the ubiquitous collaborative project intent upon reducing the distance between one domain and another and dissolving the difference of the different. The adventurer is the embodiment of distance and difference, the distance between here and there, this and that, us and them, me and you; the difference between what is happening now and what is to come—maybe. Adventurers do not have projects. The very act of projection, in its invasion of temporal and spatial alterity, is precisely the counterblast to adventure, the response of the research teams and

project managers to the unmanageable futurity of the future. As Sartre recognised, with dubious satisfaction, a project 'totalises' the world. As Frederick Jameson describes it (speaking of Sartre) with a project the world suddenly falls into place:

> My project thus *totalises* my environment, in that it causes it to order Itself around me and to reveal its own inertia…(Jameson ??, p.230)

In an adventure things forever fall apart, into fragments and clues and signs, nothing remains in its place, everything is equally significant, equally insignificant.

Speaking with Deleuze and his conception of 'nomadic thought' intellectual adventure does not have to be thought as physical movement—Jacotot was no Indiana Jones (or Harrison Ford for that matter)—but as an internal journey of intensity, one that is subterranean and can take place 'on the spot', in the classroom even.

Education without explication

'Let me explain', are words that come all too easily to the teacher's lips. In the face of ignorance, where doubt and confusion put the student at the mercy of the master, the explicators go to work explaining away everything that obstructs or obscures the road to knowledge. Clearing a path and speeding us on our way, this, it would seem, is the primary task of the teacher or, at least, the primary pedagogical demand weighing so heavily upon the teaching profession. Would a teaching without explication count as teaching or, indeed, as a profession? In a world where ignorance is pretty much synonymous with unprofessionalism, who would dare reveal their fallibility before the expectant eyes of the student body? But maybe it would be possible, if only as an experiment, to forget professionalism for a moment and resist the explicator's art, just as art itself resists explication—hence its attraction.

Before turning to the particular and special case of art however, what exactly is being resisted or temporarily forgotten here? In one sense it is clear that Rancière's problem is not so much with explication as it is with the pedagogical model of teaching as explication and the manner in which this casts the teacher in the role of master explicator. Clearly, left to their own devices students still have to explicate, they still have to disentangle the entanglements that confront them and of which they are ignorant, they still have to unfold the mysterious texts that are enfolded before and around them. The difference, of course, is that, whether finite (epistemological) or infinite (aesthetic), the explicative *process* of exposition, expansion and interpretation, with all of its detours and cul-de-sacs—the inevitable drift of erring—offers an education quite different to one cuffed to the explications of the master. It should be remembered that explication is an adventure too when properly engaged in rather than simply awaited, and when the exigency to 'find an explanation' replaces the 'stultification' of 'let me explain'.

Exemplification and attention

Now, while the vast majority of students undoubtedly *want* explication, many of them actually respond more enthusiastically to exemplification. The role of exemplification certainly introduces a dissymmetry into the situation, but this has little or nothing to do with an inequality of intelligence or knowledge, rather the teacher has to *show* how ignorance cannot be explained away but has to initiate a programme of work—the *work* of explication rather than the explanation itself, done and dusted so to speak. The role of the teacher is not to know more but to work harder, or to work better than the student. To work better is not to be better informed or more intelligent—Jacotot and Rancière believe in the equality of intelligence—to work better is to embrace rather than deny our ignorance, but admitting ignorance is not enough, although it is a start. Ignorance makes particular demands that, once recognised can become a crucial part of the teaching situation. Instead of explication, which, as mentioned above, Jacotot believes leads to 'stultification', ignorance demands *attention*, an attending to the unknown that is constrained not by the explicatory assurance of methodologies but by the *willing* of an improvisatory method. To make sense of something, to *want* to make sense of something is not, in other words, a methodological process but, rather an act of will that, through the trial and error that Jacotot requests be played out in improvisations, arrives at a kind of sense that may or may not dispel ignorance but transforms it into the very motor of production. It is here that art education might be brought into play.

Teaching aesthetic judgement

As Kant recognised in the *Critique of Judgement*, the aesthetic does not require explanation but, rather, demands reflection. 'Reflective judgement' (the aesthetic judgement of taste) is, for him, not conceptually determined and thus adds not 'one jot to knowledge' (ref) but *goes in search of* the common roots of aesthetic pleasure. This emphasis on seeking, on searching for an explanation rather than explanation itself results in an extraordinarily mobile aesthetic, one that sees art not as an object but as an endless 'transition' from singular self to collective other, from subjectivity to objectivity. Art is seen as a terrain or 'territory' rather than as a thing, a place where different judgements (the difference of aesthetic judgement) are tested and contested without end. To situate art education within the aesthetic itself then (within this particular aesthetic at least), rather than lock it into one of the many alien structures ready and waiting to explain art practice away, would perhaps help us to get a clearer view of what a non-explicative pedagogy might look like. In particular, and here Jacotot, Rancière and Kant agree, we might see a pedagogical model that finds no place for given methodologies but, instead, falls back on a '*manner*' of teaching (Kant's '*modus aestheticus*' ??) that is indeed rooted in exemplification rather than explication. Here the teacher says: 'do as I do' and not 'do as I say'. The art teacher does not need *know* more about art than the student (if they do that's pedagogically irrelevant), they need to *be* an artist and *do* art. The art teacher does not need to explicate the elements of aesthetic judgement, they need to *make* aesthetic judgements, good or bad, and be *seen* to make them by the student, good or bad. Such an exemplary act does not explain how judgements are made, but simply that they *are* made and that the student must *do* the same regardless, and without further ado.

Ignorance as a Vocation

To say again—one last time—at a moment when 'knowledge transfer', 'knowledge exchange' and 'employability' rule the roost, what place is there in such an economy for the artist? Educated in an aesthetic world devoid of knowledge, has the artist become redundant, made redundant *prior* to securing gainful employment? Does such self-made redundancy demonstrate (as if proof were needed) the irreversible marginality of the aesthetic within the dominant structures of instrumental reason or can a role still be found that does not betray the uniquely productive ignorance of the aesthetic? That is to say, to be clear, a role that does not require art to endlessly demonstrate its extra-aesthetic credentials, whether they be commercial, political, moral or even pedagogical.

Before considering an answer to these questions, another question needs to be asked first: to what extent is the so-called knowledge economy actually based on knowledge? At a time when the world is facing the most severe economic down turn since the Great Depression it is becoming increasingly clear that so much of our apparent prosperity and self-importance in the West has been built not upon sound economic knowledge but is rather the product of a spiv-culture addicted to gambling, risk-taking, chancing it and plain recklessness. Now that we know that banks are run like casinos and that, apart from short term pocket-lining, no one had a much of a clue what was going to happen, or cared less given that it was not their own money they were gambling with, maybe ignorance should not inspire the ridicule it once did.

In a consumer culture sustained by teams of advertising executives who make a fortune selling us the latest thing but who don't have any more idea as to what the next latest thing will be than do the market researchers who also make a fortune haplessly trying to work it out, it is reassuring to know that being ignorant is to be in the majority. Woody Allen sees the situation clearly when he writes:

> I did *Match Point* and everybody loved it. I did *Cassandra's Dream* and people did not come to see it. If you could calculate why, it would be great, but I can't figure it out. Nor can the studios whose time is spent trying to work out what the public wants, giving cards to people, having discussion groups—then the directors and the studios change the movies to fit what the audience wants. It is a ridiculous way of making films and it doesn't works that well…It probably cost more to do the focus group than it would be worth. (Sunday Times, The Culture, 11th January, 2009, p.4)

The difference? Woody Allen's ignorance clears the way for the next film, it is a *productive* ignorance. The studios, the focus groups, the pundits produce nothing, only bad half-baked hunches dressed-up as informed prediction grounded in a knowledge that either doesn't exist or can't be made to work effectively within a the given structures of exchange.

When one considers that the most powerful man in the world (not for much longer) is one of the most extraordinarily ignorant, something that (perhaps to his credit) he doesn't

seem to have too much of a problem with, maybe it is indeed time to come clean, remove the stigma, and own-up to what we don't know.

In the mad rush to embrace 'knowledge exchange' and 'employability', critics have rightly claimed that while on the one hand knowledge is increasingly tied to the needs of corporate bosses, at the same time these same bosses are often ignorant themselves of the human resources they will require in a rapidly changing commercial climate. The result, it is claimed, is the curtailment of 'blue skies' thinking, but for no substantial reason and with no certain outcome. One can, of course, sympathise with this, but once it is accepted that ignorance permeates the whole structure of 'knowledge exchange' itself one can begin to see the benefits of an (aesthetic) educational approach that is intent on developing the will and the wherewithal to operate effectively within the arbitrary and contingent circles of incomprehensibility. As Rancière says of the ignorant master: 'The master is he who encloses an intelligence in the *arbitrary* circle from which it can only break out by becoming necessary to itself'. Ignorance, then, is always measured by the task at hand in all of its contingency—there is no absolute ignorance. But, having said that, one might consider moving a step away from (or further than) Jacotot and Rancière, both of whom are still clearly committed to the task of *breaking out* of the circle of ignorance, albeit not through the stultification of explication. For all of its radicalism, 'panecastic' education does ultimately bring the intellectual adventure to an end, at least for the individual adventurer. Art is an arbitrary circle with *no outside*, it is, as Niklas Luhmann observes, the 'emancipation of contingency' (ref) and thus an adventure without end. Art education should reflect this and, as a counter to Socrates, bring artists to a fuller awareness of their ignorance, not as a critique but as a celebration, not as a means of exiling artists but, on the contrary, as a way of involving them directly in cultural production in the widest sense. Of course, artists know lots of things, but that should not obscure the fact that what makes artists and their work interesting is precisely what they don't know, that which is not of the epistemological order. Like George W. Bush, artists should not be ashamed of their ignorance but should be proud of the advantages it gives them in the largely fictional world of 'knowledge exchange' where no one knows half as much as they like to pretend.

References

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