



The movement for the return of Philosophy to upper-secondary education in the post-1964 context: the first National Meeting of Philosophy Departments and the *Documento de Brasília*

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Abstract: The reform in basic education promoted by Law 5.692/1971, in the context of the post-1964 military regime, had as one of its consequences the exclusion of Philosophy from secondary education. In response, educators, students and entities connected to this area of knowledge started a broad movement for the return of the subject to the schools. At the centre of this movement were the Philosophy Departments of some of the main universities, which promoted national meetings to discuss and plan actions aimed at this goal. The present article intends to briefly discuss the considerations of the 1st National Meeting of Philosophy Departments, held in 1981 in Rio de Janeiro, which resulted in the Rio de Janeiro Document and, later, the Brasilia Document, both of which had great echoes in the press. The text is part of the author's master's dissertation, defended in 1991, here updated and adapted for publication purposes. It is hoped that the resumption of those discussions will help teachers and students of philosophy to deal with the challenges they face contemporarily.

Keywords: Philosophy Teaching; Rio de Janeiro Document; Brasilia Document; Philosophy in Secondary Education.

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O movimento pela volta da Filosofia ao ensino médio no contexto pós-1964: o primeiro Encontro Nacional de Departamentos de Filosofia e o Documento de Brasília

Resumo: A reforma na educação básica promovida pela Lei n. 5.692/1971, no contexto do regime militar pós-1964, teve como uma de suas consequências a exclusão da Filosofia do ensino médio. Em resposta, educadores, estudantes e entidades ligadas a essa área de conhecimento iniciaram um amplo movimento pela volta da disciplina às escolas. No centro desse movimento estavam os Departamentos de Filosofia de algumas das principais universidades do país, os quais promoveram encontros nacionais para debater e planejar ações voltadas a esse objetivo. O presente artigo pretende discutir brevemente as considerações do I Encontro Nacional de Departamentos de Filosofia, realizado em 1981, no Rio de Janeiro, do qual resultaram o Documento do Rio de Janeiro e, mais tarde, o Documento de Brasília, ambos com grande repercussão na imprensa. O texto é parte da dissertação de mestrado do autor, defendida em 1991, aqui atualizado e adaptado para fins de publicação. Espera-se que a retomada daquelas discussões auxilie professores e estudantes de filosofia a enfrentar os desafios com que se deparam contemporaneamente.

Palavras-chave: Ensino de Filosofia; Documento do Rio de Janeiro; Documento de Brasília; Filosofia no Ensino Médio.

Il movimento per il ritorno della filosofia nell'istruzione secondaria nel contesto post-1964: il primo Incontro Nazionale dei Dipartimenti di Filosofia e il Documento di Brasília

Riassunto: La riforma dell'istruzione promossa dalla legge 5.692/1971, nel contesto del regime militare post-1964, ha avuto tra le sue conseguenze l'esclusione della filosofia dalle scuole secondarie. In risposta, educatori, studenti e associazioni legate a quest'area del sapere hanno dato vita a un ampio movimento per il ritorno della disciplina nelle scuole. Al centro di questo movimento c'erano i Dipartimenti di Filosofia di alcune delle principali università del Paese, che hanno promosso incontri nazionali per discutere e organizzare azioni in tal senso. Il presente articolo intende discutere brevemente le considerazioni del 1° Incontro Nazionale dei Dipartimenti di Filosofia, tenutosi nel 1981 a Rio de Janeiro, che ha prodotto il

Documento di Rio de Janeiro e, successivamente, il Documento di Brasília, entrambi di grande impatto sulla stampa. Il testo fa parte della tesi di Master dell'autore, presentata nel 1991, qui aggiornata e adattata ai fini della pubblicazione. Si spera che la ripresa di queste discussioni aiuti i professori e gli studenti di filosofia ad affrontare le sfide che si pongono al giorno d'oggi.

Parole chiave: Insegnamento della Filosofia; Documento di Rio de Janeiro; Documento di Brasília; Filosofia Nell'istruzione Secondaria.

Introdução

The state of exception established in Brazil by the 1964 civil-military coup imposed significant changes on the education system in order to adapt it to the new economic and political conditions then in force.

Within basic education, the most significant of these changes was the reform of primary and secondary education (as what are now known as elementary and upper-secondary education were then called), implemented by Law No. 5,692 of 1971.

Inspired by the ideals of the Doctrine of National Security and Development – one of the regime's main ideological pillars – aligned with the recommendations of the MEC–USAID agreements, and guided by a technicist conception of education, the reform conferred upon upper-secondary education a compulsory vocational character. The curriculum was divided into two parts: a common “core,” consisting of compulsory content nationwide, defined by the Federal Council of Education, and a “diversified component,” made up of subjects and vocational tracks established by the State Councils of Education and supposedly defined according to regional and school-specific characteristics.

In addition to the subjects belonging to these two curricular components, the law also established the compulsory teaching of Moral and Civic Education, clearly doctrinal in purpose, as well as Physical Education, Art Education, and Health Programs.

Philosophy, which under the Lei de Diretrizes e Bases da Educação Nacional (Lei No. 4.024/1961) (Law of Guidelines and Bases of National

Education, Law No. 4,024/1961) was no longer a compulsory subject, became optional at the discretion of schools. However, the technicist orientation of the curriculum – with its emphasis on vocational training – combined with the subordination of education to the objectives of national security, effectively ensured that, in practice, the subject was entirely excluded from upper-secondary education. As Cartolano (1985, p. 78) observes:

With regard to Philosophy, it is through the diversified component that it has the opportunity to be included in the school's full curriculum: it may either be part of general education or integrated into the specialized training component, depending on the objectives for which it is chosen [...] The decision to include it or not as an elective subject in the curricula of vocational programs (full, partial, or basic) rests with the institution. Given that the fundamental orientation of secondary education remains preparation for work or initiation into it, it is unlikely that Philosophy will be included in the diversified component, being displaced by other subjects that better serve that goal.¹

In response to this exclusion, educators, students, and organizations linked to the study and Philosophy teaching began to mobilize in order to reverse this measure. Gradually, a consistent movement advocating the return of the subject to schools took shape and eventually assumed nationwide proportions. At the center of this movement were the Philosophy Departments of some of the country's leading universities, which organized meetings to debate and plan actions toward this objective.

¹ Original: “*Quanto à Filosofia, é através da parte diversificada que ela tem a chance de ser incluída no currículo pleno da escola: ela tanto pode ser disciplina da educação geral como pode integrar a formação especial do currículo, a depender dos objetivos pelos quais for escolhida [...] Ao estabelecimento cabe a tarefa de escolhê-la ou não, como disciplina optativa para compor os currículos das habilitações (plenas, parciais ou básicas). Tendo em vista que a orientação fundamental do ensino do 2º grau continua a ser o preparo para o trabalho ou a iniciação a ele, é pouco provável que a Filosofia integrará a parte diversificada, sendo preterida por outras disciplinas que atendam àquela meta*”.

All translations of quoted material were made by the translator of this article, unless otherwise noted.

In total, five Encontros Nacionais de Departamentos de Filosofia – ENDF (National Meetings of Philosophy Departments) were held in different states, each producing a document synthesizing the participants' positions. The first – and perhaps the most significant, due to its impact and subsequent developments – was the Rio de Janeiro Meeting, held in 1981 at the Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ)².

This article seeks to briefly revisit the discussions of that first meeting, which resulted in the *Documento do Rio de Janeiro* (Rio de Janeiro Document) and, subsequently, the *Documento de Brasília* (Brasília Document). The latter had a resounding impact, causing the debate surrounding Philosophy teaching at the upper-secondary level to move beyond academic circles and gain definitive visibility in the mainstream press, where a heated public dispute between proponents and opponents unfolded – an echo that can still be heard today. Understanding the content of those discussions may therefore help Philosophy teachers and students confront contemporary challenges, especially in light of the recent reform of upper-secondary education, which once again seriously threatens the presence of Philosophy in the curriculum.

This text is part of my master's thesis, defended in 1991 in the Graduate Program in Education at Unicamp, here updated and adapted for publication purposes. The research sources include typewritten documents from the aforementioned meetings and university administrative records, as well as news reports, articles, and editorials published in the press. Much of this material was obtained in photocopy form and, in the case of journalistic sources, through clippings collected from newspaper archives or provided by individuals. As not all media outlets maintain complete digital archives of their editions, it was not always possible to fully identify bibliographic details such as page numbers. Nevertheless, these sources are cited here, as they are essential for reconstructing and understanding the movement advocating the return of Philosophy to upper-secondary education during the period in question.

² Others encounters were: II ENDF, em 1982, em Goiânia/SP; III ENDF, em 1983, em Santos/SP; IV ENDF em Cuiabá/MT, em 1984; e V ENDF, em 1985, em Vitória/ES.

The First ENDF – Rio de Janeiro/1981

Organized by the Department of Philosophy of the Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro, the First ENDF was held from October 19 to 23, 1981, at the Colégio Sagrado Coração de Jesus, in the Alto da Boa Vista district of Rio de Janeiro.³

The meeting brought together Philosophy departments from across the country to present the current state of undergraduate and graduate programs in their respective regions. Alongside these presentations, panel discussions addressed key themes such as the situation of Philosophy in Brazil, curriculum renewal, the return of Philosophy to secondary education, and research and publication in the field. The program also included plans to celebrate the bicentennial of the publication of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*.

The broad representation of philosophy departments at the meeting, which also included student participation, clearly reflects the extent to which the movement advocating the return of Philosophy to secondary education had expanded. Indeed, presentations were scheduled from the Philosophy Departments of the following universities: Unicamp, PUC-SP, UnB, the Universidade Regional de Mossoró, USP, and the Federal Universities of Pará, Minas Gerais, Maranhão, Espírito Santo, Paraíba, Rio de Janeiro, Amazonas, Rio Grande do Norte, Rio Grande do Sul, Alagoas, Ceará, and Goiás (Pegoraro; Capalbo, 1981, n.p.).

Three documents resulted from this meeting: “Recomendações aos Departamentos” (Recommendations to the Departments); “Decisões Finais do Encontro” (Final Decisions of the Meeting); and “Retorno da Filosofia aos Segundo e Terceiro Graus” (The Return of Philosophy to Secondary and Higher Education). All were forwarded to the Philosophy Departments of each institution, the Secretaria de Ensino Superior (SESU) (Secretariat for

³ These meetings were initially referred to as *Encontros Nacionais de Chefes de Departamentos de Filosofia* (National Meetings of Heads of Philosophy Departments). Regarding the First ENDF, see: PHILOSOPHY may return to secondary education. *Jornal do Brasil*, October 18, 1981; RETURN..., 1981.

Higher Education) of the Ministry of Education, CNPq⁴, and CAPES⁵ (Pegoraro, 1981b). This article analyzes only the third document, popularly known as the *Documento do Rio de Janeiro*, which contains reflections on Philosophy teaching in Brazil and presents the first concrete proposal for the inclusion of the subject at both educational levels.

Initially, the text provides a brief overview of the movement advocating the return of Philosophy to upper-secondary education. It highlights the advantages of the period prior to Law No. 5,692/71, when upper-secondary school students were able to engage with the subject – advantages such as the possibility of situating themselves “with greater clarity and confidence within their cultural universe and their specific field of knowledge” and of achieving “greater logical rigor in the articulation of knowledge” (Retorno..., 1981, p. 1).⁶ In addition, it denounces the harmful consequences resulting from the disappearance of the subject:

There is no doubt that this fact contributed to the decline of intelligence, bringing as consequences the cultural impoverishment of our youth. Their capacity for a comprehensive view of problems is today very poorly developed, or almost nonexistent. Perhaps this is one of the greatest limitations of our educational system. (Retorno..., 1981, p. 1)⁷

The document also emphasizes the relationship between Philosophy teaching in secondary education and at the university level, recalling that,

⁴ CNPq stands for Conselho Nacional de Desenvolvimento Científico e Tecnológico (National Council for Scientific and Technological Development).

⁵ CAPES stands for Coordination for Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Nível Superior (Improvement of Higher Education Personnel).

⁶ Original: “*com mais clareza e segurança em seu universo cultural e em sua área específica do saber*”; “*maior rigor lógico na articulação dos conhecimentos*.”

⁷ Original: “*Sem dúvida, este fato contribuiu para a decadência da inteligência trazendo, como consequências, o empobrecimento cultural de nossa juventude. Sua capacidade de visão global dos problemas é hoje muito pouco ou quase nada desenvolvida. Talvez esta seja uma das maiores limitações de nosso sistema educacional*”.

with the elimination of the subject from upper-secondary school, professors found themselves in an “absolutely anomalous and contradictory situation: universities continued to grant degrees to individuals who had no possibility of exercising the profession.” It further warns: “In light of this situation, many departments were closed. Those that remain survive with great difficulty.” (Retorno..., 1981, p. 2)⁸

According to the participants of this first meeting, it was only from 1975 onward – when several graduate programs in Philosophy were implemented in the country – that a clearer and more comprehensive movement began to take shape, aiming to “re-situate philosophy within our national reality, this time under new frameworks and according to new pedagogical processes” (Retorno..., 1981, p. 2).⁹ This statement made it clear from the outset that the position adopted by those segments of the movement – more closely linked to university Philosophy departments and to SEAF (Sociedade de Estudos e Atividades Filosóficas) [Society for Philosophical Studies and Activities] – favored a form of philosophy different from that traditionally taught prior to the suppression of the subject, which was generally regarded as encyclopedic, bookish, and abstract.

Highlighting the pioneering role of the Philosophy Department at USP, the document affirms the level of maturity reached by the movement through numerous regional meetings of philosophy teachers and students, all of which concluded that the return of the subject was an urgent necessity. (Retorno..., 1981, p. 2)¹⁰

The text concludes by justifying and proposing the urgent implementation of Philosophy in both upper-secondary education and the university. It clarifies, however, that this should not occur “through a simple

⁸ Original: “*absolutamente anômala e contraditória: as Faculdades continuaram fornecendo diplomas a pessoas sem possibilidade do exercício da profissão*”; “*Face a essa situação, muitos Departamentos foram fechados. Os demais, sobrevivem a duras penas*”.

⁹ Original: “*ressituar a filosofia em nossa realidade nacional, desta feita, em novos moldes e segundo novos processos pedagógicos*”.

¹⁰ Meetings held in Belém do Pará, São Luís do Maranhão, Mossoró, Teresina, Belo Horizonte, Santa Maria, Porto Alegre, and Fortaleza are mentioned.

decree,” but rather as the result of “broad debate between the intellectual community and the Ministry of Education (MEC).” It further considers it essential that Philosophy classes be taught by professors “properly licensed in Philosophy” and “approved through public competitive examinations.” (Return..., 1981, p. 3)¹¹

The final assembly of the meeting elected the members of the Coordenação Nacional dos Departamentos de Filosofia (CNDF) (National Coordination of Philosophy Departments), to whom the task of preparing the Second ENDF was delegated. (Pegoraro et al., 1982)¹²

The emphasis of the first meeting lay on the image of the philosopher as a critical teacher, in opposition both to those who content themselves with the historical analysis of the past and to the so-called “capitulated” teacher – that is, according to Olinto Pegoraro, one who places himself at the service of maintaining the status quo, “who has capitulated in the face of the conveniences of his institution or of political, economic, and even commercial demands.” Both positions are regarded as sterile. For this reason, Pegoraro argues (Professores..., 1981, n.p.) that the philosophy teacher “must integrate himself into the moment in which he lives and discuss, with his students, the problems that emerge from the community, such as work and freedom.”¹³

To define the role of the philosophy teacher in this sense, within a context marked by the exploitation of the labor of the majority through wage deterioration and income concentration, as well as by the suppression of the fundamental rights of the person and the citizen, inevitably meant provoking a

¹¹ Original: “*por um simples Decreto*”; “*amplo debate entre a comunidade intelectual e o MEC*”; “*devidamente licenciados em Filosofia*”; “*aprovados em concurso público*”.

¹² The CNDF met on April 24-25, 1982, and decided that the second meeting would be held in Goiânia from October 22 to 24 of the following year, with the central theme being the introduction of Philosophy into secondary education (Pegoraro et al., 1982).

¹³ Original: “*que capitulou face às conveniências de sua escola ou a exigências políticas, econômicas e mesmo comerciais*”; “*deve integrar-se ao momento em que vive e discutir, com seus alunos, os problemas que emergem da comunidade como, por exemplo, o trabalho e a liberdade*.”

reaction from conservative sectors of society, which viewed discussion and critical engagement with Brazilian reality as a threat to their class interests.

One of the spokespersons for this reaction was *Jornal do Brasil*, which, in an editorial dated October 24 of that year, when commenting on the image of the “capitulated” philosopher repudiated by participants of the First ENDF, stated:

[...] one may also capitulate – sometimes without even realizing it – to the fashions of the moment; and the images of the philosophy teacher discussed at that meeting in Alto da Boa Vista seem far more the product of fashion than of philosophical reflection. (Pequenos..., 1981)¹⁴

In response to this editorial, Pegoraro (1981a, [n.p.]) published an article in the same *Jornal do Brasil*, on behalf of the CNDF, forcefully rejecting the insinuations made therein. For him, the so-called “little philosophers” were “no fewer than 29 department heads, graduate program coordinators, and approximately 60 professors and students from the country’s leading universities.”

The *Jornal do Brasil* returned to its criticism of the conclusions of the I ENDF in another editorial which, on the one hand, praised the initiative of the Rio de Janeiro State Department of Education to reintroduce the subject at the upper-secondary level and, on the other, repudiated the “critical philosophy” advocated by the meeting’s participants:

This “critical philosophy” is pleonastic – and sometimes hardly critical at all. Already in ancient Greece, philosophy was conceived as a way of probing reality and distinguishing the false from the authentic and the consistent. It was for this purpose that Socrates walked the streets of Athens asking inconvenient

¹⁴ Original: “[...] *também se pode capitular, até sem o saber, às modas do momento; e as imagens do professor de filosofia discutidas nesse encontro do Alto da Boa Vista parecem muito mais fruto da moda do que de uma reflexão filosófica*”.

questions. “Critical philosophy,” therefore, is a redundancy. (Velhos..., 1981)¹⁵

Although this claim of redundancy may appear to acknowledge the critical nature of philosophy, there were clearly disagreements regarding how this critical character should be conceived. Whereas for philosophy professors and students critique was linked to the transformative action upon reality,¹⁶ the *Jornal do Brasil* maintained that philosophy should not be “the study of the concrete works of human beings – even of works as complex as social systems – but rather of the deep motivations of human actions,” thus proposing a philosophy curriculum centered on the exposition of the ideas of the “old philosophers.” (Velhos..., 1981)¹⁷

In fact, *Jornal do Brasil*’s concern lay with the political direction that such critique might take:

[...] this critical philosophy often limits the scope of its own inquiry. It fell to the nineteenth century to develop a thorough critique of the capitalist system as it reached its full development. The twentieth century witnessed the rise of various socialist models – and came to know them just as thoroughly as the nineteenth century had come to understand the mechanisms of capitalist accumulation. In Europe, the critique of Marxism has already reached a highly advanced stage; here,

¹⁵ Original: “Essa ‘filosofia crítica’ é pleonástica - e às vezes é bem pouco crítica. Já na velha Grécia, a filosofia era concebida como uma forma de auscultar a realidade e distinguir o falso do autêntico e do consistente. Com esse propósito é que Sócrates andava pelas ruas de Atenas fazendo perguntas inconvenientes. ‘Filosofia crítica’, portanto, é uma redundância.”

¹⁶ The *Documento de Brasília* proposed: “A Philosophy concerned with contributing to the young person’s ability to take a position in relation to reality and to the proposals of their society; a Philosophy that seeks to understand reality critically as a whole, in order to transform it, placing it at the service of humankind” (History..., 1981, p. 8). In the original: “Uma Filosofia que se preocupe em contribuir para que o jovem possa posicionar-se diante da realidade e das propostas de sua sociedade; uma Filosofia que procure compreender criticamente a realidade como um todo, a fim de transformá-la, colocando-a a serviço do homem.”

¹⁷ Original: “o estudo das obras concretas dos homens – mesmo de obras tão complexas quanto os sistemas sociais – e sim da motivação profunda das ações humanas.”

however, there are still those who remain confined to criticizing capitalism as it was criticized in the previous century. (Velhos..., 1981)¹⁸

It is worth noting that, although it opposed the proposal formulated at the I ENDF, *Jornal do Brasil* endorsed the initiative of the Rio de Janeiro State Department of Education to promote the reintroduction of philosophy at the upper-secondary level. This suggests that the guiding line adopted by the Department to implement this measure diverged from the orientation proposed by the sectors involved in the movement for the subject's return, which, in turn, seems to reveal the distance at which these sectors were kept from the process of discussion and implementation of the policy.

All the repercussions generated by the I ENDF contributed to bringing to the fore theoretical and ideological divergences concerning the issue of philosophy teaching at the upper-secondary level, delineating – more or less clearly – certain positions: 1st) those who were categorically opposed to the return of the subject, regardless of the form it might assume. This position, apparently a minority one,¹⁹ was defended by the most conservative sectors of society, entrenched in the various hegemonic apparatuses of the “Estado de Segurança Nacional” (ESN) (National Security State):²⁰ the press, the state bureaucracy, universities, and the

¹⁸ Original: “[...] essa filosofia crítica limita, muitas vezes o seu raio de ação. Coube ao século XIX desenvolver uma cerrada crítica ao sistema capitalista, que então chegava ao seu pleno desenvolvimento. O século XX pôde assistir à ascensão de diversos modelos socialistas – e pôde conhecê-los tão bem quanto o século XIX conhecia os mecanismos de acumulação capitalista. A crítica ao marxismo já chegou, na Europa, a um estágio bem avançado; por aqui há quem se limite à crítica do capitalismo tal como ela era feita no século passado.”

¹⁹ In fact, few voices spoke out unequivocally against the return of Philosophy to secondary education, perhaps because such a stance would have required making explicit the authoritarian and illegitimate character of the State. Indeed, as Pegoraro warns (1979, p. 13), in a certain sense the defense of Philosophy itself contributed to legitimizing that State: “Totalitarian regimes like to present themselves as protectors of culture, sport, art, and philosophy.” In the original: “Os regimes totalitários gostam de aparecer como protetores da cultura, do esporte, da arte e da filosofia”.

²⁰ The expression “National Security State” designates, according to Alves (1984, p. 27), the “permeation of state structures by the National Security and Development Doctrine”. In the

Church; 2nd) Those who might agree with the measure, so long as it involved a harmless, well-behaved philosophy that posed no threat to the interests of capital. This tendency was represented by most members of the state bureaucracy and by intellectuals linked to the traditionalist Church who expressed views on the issue; 3rd) finally, there emerged what appeared to be the majority position among the leadership of the movement advocating the return of the subject, led by the SEAF and Philosophy Departments, which defended a philosophy committed to rigorous and critical reflection on reality, aimed at its transformation.

Indeed, the broad participation of Philosophy departments in this first meeting offers a more accurate sense of the scale and mobilizing capacity that the movement had been acquiring. From the perspective of the Estado de Segurança Nacional (ESN), this situation was clearly a cause for concern. Although not all of its intellectuals openly opposed the return of Philosophy, they were certainly unwilling to run the risk that, once reinstated, the subject might assume characteristics contrary to official objectives. Hence the need for closer contact between the state bureaucracy and the movement's leadership, with the aim of ensuring – if not full control over the process of reintroducing the subject – at least close monitoring and vigilant oversight, to prevent more significant deviations.

This appears to have been the intention behind the Ministry of Education's decision, through the Secretaria de Ensino Superior (SESU), upon becoming aware of the conclusions of the I ENDF, to convene a meeting from November 16 to 18, 1981, with eleven consultant professors, specialists in Philosophy, many of whom were actively engaged in the movement. The term "consultants" is indicative of the non-deliberative character of the meeting; accordingly, the Ministry of Education was under no obligation to implement the conclusions formulated by its participants. The consulting team included the following professors: Marilena Chaui (USP), Olinto Pegoraro (UFRJ), Cosimo de Ávila (UFF), José Henrique dos Santos (UFMG), Nelson Gomes (UnB), Álvaro Valls (UFRGS), Benedito

original: "*Impregnação das estruturas de Estado pela Doutrina de Segurança Nacional e Desenvolvimento*".

Nunes (UFPA), Maria de Jesus Silva (UFMA), Antonio Joaquim Severino (PUC-SP), Dermeval Saviani (PUC-SP), and Estevão Martins (UnB).²¹

The stated objective, however, was to deepen the discussion of the considerations raised at the I ENDF and to draft a document to be sent to all departments for evaluation, with the aim of gathering suggestions and amendments in order to implement the return of Philosophy to upper-secondary education. The outcome of the consultants' work was the document "História deste texto – O Ensino de Filosofia no 2.º Grau" (History of This Text – Philosophy Teaching in Secondary Education), more widely known as the *Documento de Brasília*. It was broadly disseminated among all those concerned with the issue, including the Ministry of Education, State Secretariats of Education, the Federal and State Councils of Education, and university Philosophy departments. The text also received coverage in the mainstream press, such that from that point onward the *Documento de Brasília* became one of the movement's principal points of reference. In the words of Professor Maria Célia Simon (1986, p. 23):

Up to that point, the confrontation between positions for and against Philosophy teaching at the secondary level had been confined to the interior of university walls or to meetings of societies and groups interested in the issue. With the dissemination of the "Documento de Brasília," however, this contradiction came to light. The document, in fact, provoked a strong reaction from conservative sectors, as evidenced by editorials and

²¹ It is worth noting that this consultants' meeting also gave rise to the "Comissão de Estudo do MEC/Filosofia" (MEC/Philosophy Study Commission), which began to advocate the return of the subject, but without imposing it by decree, in order to avoid a possible leveling of realities as disparate as those found among the Brazilian states. This commission included, among others, Estevão Chaves de Resende Martins, from the Universidade de Brasília (UnB), as a representative of Philosophy teachers (A Volta..., 1984).

articles published in the major press outlets of Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo.²²

Forward, then, to what advisers of MEC has to say.

The Documento de Brasília

From the outset, in the section entitled “Perspectivas Gerais da Reflexão Filosófica” (General Perspectives of Philosophical Reflection), the authors make their conception of philosophy explicit:

Philosophy may present itself as an analysis and articulation of human, cultural, scientific, and socio-political experience, aiming at a global understanding of the meaning of historical existence. (História..., 1981, p. 3)²³

According to this perspective, it falls to the philosopher to

[...] organize the overall meaning and coherence of the natural and cultural events that surround them, denouncing the ideological obstacles that divert or delay the process of freedom, sociability, prosperity, and democratic coexistence among peoples and cultures. In short, philosophy seeks to awaken in young

²² Original: “[...] até esta data, o enfrentamento das posições pró e contra a filosofia no 2º grau se restringia ao interior dos muros universitários ou a encontros de sociedades e grupos interessados na questão. Com a divulgação do ‘Documento de Brasília’ a contradição veio à luz. O documento, de fato, provocou forte reação de setores conservadores, como atestam editoriais e artigos na grande imprensa do Rio e de São Paulo”.

²³ Original: “A filosofia pode apresentar-se como análise e articulação da experiência humana, cultural, científica e sócio-política visando a compreensão global do sentido da existência histórica”.

people and adults a critical reading of the world in which they live. (História..., 1981, p. 3)²⁴

This is, therefore, a conception of philosophy that stands in direct opposition to views that reduce philosophical activity to contemplation, metaphysical speculation, or abstraction detached from the concrete existence of human beings.

Addressing the issue of vocational training, the document points to the failure of Law No. 5,692/1971 and states that “it is not the school’s role to provide direct and immediate qualification for work,” but rather to do so indirectly and mediately, “by ensuring that students appropriate certain prerequisites that constitute what might be called a basic and general education.” (História..., 1981, p. 4)²⁵ Within this basic education, philosophy would play a fundamental role.

Thus, within this debate over the function of Upper-secondary education, the presence of philosophy, according to the document, would be justified on two grounds:

On one hand, it follows from a conception of the school that is increasingly becoming consensual; on the other, due to the very nature of philosophical reflection, it entails the opening of a problematizing space within secondary education itself, which may contribute to framing the ongoing discussions surrounding the search for a path for

²⁴ Original: “[...] *organizar o sentido e a coerência globais dos eventos naturais e culturais que o cercam, denunciando os entraves ideológicos que desviam ou retardam o processo de liberdade, sociabilidade, prosperidade e convivência democrática entre os povos e as culturas. Numa palavra, a filosofia visa despertar nos jovens e adultos uma leitura crítica do mundo em que vivem*”.

²⁵ Original: “*não cabe à escola realizar de modo direto e imediato a qualificação para o trabalho*”; “*garantindo a apropriação, pelos alunos, de determinados pré-requisitos que configuram aquilo que poderíamos chamar de formação básica e geral*”.

secondary education in contemporary Brazilian society. (História..., 1981, p. 4-5)²⁶

In fact, in the view of the Brasília consultants, regardless of the purpose attributed to upper-secondary education, philosophy should be guaranteed a place in the curriculum, both “as a moment for understanding and discussing vocational techniques” and as “preparation for university education.” (História..., 1981, p. 3)²⁷

The document further argues that philosophy could make a fundamental contribution to teachers of other subjects – and vice versa – inasmuch as it would foster

[...] an integrated apprehension of educational work, that is, of the foundations of the subjects taught, the links among them, their articulation with society, and their role in shaping future professionals. It is by no means a matter of taking philosophy as the guiding principle of the pedagogical and cultural work of the teaching staff, but rather of viewing it as capable of providing support so that teachers may reflect on their own activity; at the same time, contact with other teachers may help philosophy teachers better situate their own work within the overall set of teaching activities. (História..., 1981, p. 3)²⁸

²⁶ Original: “De um lado, é consequência de uma concepção de escola que vai crescentemente se tornando consensual; de outro, pelo próprio caráter da reflexão filosófica, implica a abertura de um espaço problematizador no interior mesmo do ensino de 2º grau que poderá contribuir para tematizar as discussões em andamento em torno da busca de um caminho para o ensino de 2º grau na sociedade brasileira atual.”

²⁷ Original: “como momento de compreensão e discussão das técnicas profissionalizantes”; “preparação para a formação universitária.”

²⁸ Original: “[...] uma apreensão de conjunto do trabalho educativo, isto é, dos fundamentos das disciplinas ministradas, dos vínculos entre elas, de sua articulação com a sociedade e seu papel na criação de futuros profissionais. Não se trata, de modo algum, de tomar a filosofia como orientadora do trabalho pedagógico e cultural do corpo docente, mas de encará-la como capaz de fornecer subsídios para que os professores reflitam sobre sua própria atividade; ao mesmo tempo, o contato com os demais docentes poderá auxiliar aos professores de filosofia a melhor situar seu próprio trabalho no conjunto das atividades de ensino.”

Philosophy would thus fulfill an important role in the construction of interdisciplinarity.

Regarding the fear of ideological indoctrination – so often invoked by opponents of the proposal to reintroduce philosophy into upper-secondary education²⁹ – the document leaves no room for doubt:

Philosophy teaching at the secondary level should not be marked by a doctrinal or dogmatic character, since doctrine, understood as a static body of pre-established truths, and reflection are incompatible terms and irreconcilable theoretical attitudes. (História..., 1981, p. 3)³⁰

As for how teachers should approach the subject matter, the text emphasizes the need to ensure, simultaneously, students' access to the specific cultural field of philosophy and the problematization of their concrete lived experience. This is because philosophy, as a millennia-old intellectual activity encompassing its own conceptual *corpus*, requires initiating young people into a historically constituted – yet open – body of philosophical works.

At the same time, this should not amount to a bookish, encyclopedic, or academicist form of teaching; rather, it must be recognized that

[...] philosophy will only play a relevant role within secondary education and for adolescents if it is able to contribute, through its body of questions and reflections, to leading young people to problematize their experiences and to express consciously those experiences that are otherwise merely lived by them. (História..., 1981, p. 3).³¹

²⁹ Regarding this matter, see Silveira (1991).

³⁰ Original: “O ensino da filosofia no 2º grau não deve ser marcado por um caráter doutrinário, ou dogmático, uma vez que doutrina entendida como corpo estático de verdades pré-estabelecidas e reflexão são termos incompatíveis e atitudes teóricas irreconciliáveis.”

³¹ Original: “O ensino da filosofia no 2º grau não deve ser marcado por um caráter doutrinário, ou dogmático, uma vez que doutrina entendida como corpo estático de verdades pré-estabelecidas e reflexão são termos incompatíveis e atitudes teóricas irreconciliáveis.”

To further justify the need for the subject's presence in the curriculum, the document argues – particularly in its Draft A, entitled “Sobre a Filosofia no Segundo Grau” (On Philosophy in Secondary Education) – that, given the pragmatic and immediate mindset dominating the Brazilian educational system and the erosion of critical education brought about by recent changes in secondary schooling, philosophy would contribute to a broader reform of this level of education, “insofar as it values critical reflection on the contents of knowledge, which consequently strengthens the foundations of education as a whole.” (História..., 1981, p. 3)³²

The objectives that the subject should pursue are outlined as follows:

- a) understanding the meaning and origins of the experiences lived by adolescents (considering regional, class, gender, and other differences);
- b) the reflective elaboration of these experiences through their articulation with the social, political, scientific, and artistic issues of the present;
- c) the insertion of this reflection on adolescents' present experience into an understanding of the history of thought and culture, in which philosophical discourse operates on three levels: as produced by a history; as reflecting on the meaning of that history; and as a back-and-forth movement from experience to texts and from texts back to experience. (História..., 1981, p. 3)³³

This concern with reflecting on lived experience, articulating it with social and political issues, as well as this dialectical movement between texts

³² Original: “na medida em que valoriza a reflexão crítica dos conteúdos do saber, o que tem como consequência o fortalecimento das bases de todo o ensino”.

³³ Original: “a) a compreensão do sentido da origem das experiências vividas pelos adolescentes (levando em consideração as diferenças regionais, de classe, sexo etc.); b) a elaboração reflexiva dessa experiência por sua articulação com as questões sociais, políticas, científicas e artísticas do nosso presente; c) a inserção dessa reflexão sobre o presente dos adolescentes numa compreensão da história do pensamento e da cultura, na qual o discurso filosófico se insere em três planos: como produzido por uma história; como refletindo sobre o sentido dessa história; como vai-e-vem da experiência aos textos e destes àquela”.

and experience, underscores the innovative and eminently critical character that the Brasília consultants sought to impart to philosophy teaching.

Regarding human resources (“Minuta B: Sobre Recursos Humanos e Materiais” [Draft B: On Human and Material Resources]), the document considers it essential that teachers responsible for the subject hold teaching degrees and/or professional certification in philosophy and be hired through competitive public examinations. It also proposes the organization of professional development courses for these teachers.

Concerning curricular content (“Minuta C: Sobre os Roteiros Pragmáticos Alternativos” [Draft C: On Alternative Programmatic Outlines]), in order to awaken in young people an interest in reflection and a desire to pursue it beyond upper-secondary education, the consultants recommend that philosophical reflection be carried out “starting from problems, questions, and basic issues that students seek to analyze and articulate coherently in philosophical language.” (História..., 1981, p. 3)³⁴

The proposed programmatic outlines encompassed the following themes: “human action,” “communication and the media,” “the body and art,” “education,” “the experience of knowledge,” “the experience of scientific knowledge,” “the experience of freedom,” “religious experience,” “philosophy: education and school,” “philosophy and human reality,” “political ideas and ideologies,” “human relationships,” and “work.”

Within these themes, several guiding questions are suggested, including: “human action as a basic element in the construction of the world”; “the profession in its social and political value”; “the importance of friendship in the struggle for a better society”; human problems such as “slums” and “hunger”; “social justice”; “participation and social transformation”; “political consciousness”; “alienation”; the relationship between “technology,” “communication,” and “politics”; “mass media as vehicles for the democratization of culture”; the relationship between the body and “personal identity”; “why human beings seek art”; “what

³⁴ Original: “a partir de problemas, perguntas e questões básicas que os alunos tentam analisar e articular coerentemente em linguagem filosófica.”

education is for”; “the relationship between education, culture, and the State”; the criteria for the validity of knowledge; “how accumulated knowledge is transformed”; the “fallibility of scientific knowledge”; “the Self and the Other: freedom as mediation and recognition”; “violence and work”; work as slavery (alienation) and as an experience of freedom; “popular religiosity as popular creation and richness”; “religion and its insertion into community problems” and its “duty to criticize forms of exploitation and domination”; “faith as participation in the construction of a fair world”; “why philosophy in school?”; “what is school for?”; “is it possible to be happy? How?”; the “historical, social, and cultural conditioning of representations of the good”; the “distinction between political ideas and political ideologies”; “the human relationships adolescents consider most fundamental and problematic” (family, friends, school, work); “the various forms of violence” (urban violence, social relations in rural and urban contexts, consumerism, etc.); “the reality of work in Brazil”; and “the meaning of work” (História..., 1981, p. 3).

This, then, in broad outline, is the content of the *Documento de Brasília*, marked by a distinctly progressive and forward-looking character in relation to the traditional Philosophy Teaching. It thus becomes clear why its dissemination provoked a strong reaction from conservative sectors of society, intensifying the ideological struggle surrounding the issue of Philosophy teaching at the secondary level.³⁵

The reception of the *Documento de Brasília*

The conservative reaction, indeed, was not long in coming. As early as January 1982, the philosopher Antonio Paim (Paim, 1982, pp. 6-7) published a lengthy article in the newspaper *O Estado de S. Paulo*, in which he attacked certain tendencies that he regarded as bitter enemies of

³⁵ SESU/MEC released *Documento de Brasília* among Philosophy Departments at the country, asking those to forward their own amendment proposes. Accordingly Waldemar Valle Martins, due to June 30, 1982, 27 answers were sent to MEC.

Philosophy, namely the “Philosophy of Liberation” and its counterpart in the field of Theology, for advocating an “engaged philosophy,” allegedly “at the service of the option for the poor and other similar nonsense.” Paim believed that representatives of these tendencies were articulating themselves efficiently in the country and had been favored by “official sponsorship.” According to him,

directly engaged in this undertaking were the Secretaria de Ensino Superior and CAPES, which were among the highest authorities of the second tier of the Ministry of Education. (Paim, 1982, p. 7)^{36 37}

Paim’s concerns, however – whether intentionally or not – contained a considerable degree of exaggeration. In fact, the reasons that led MEC and SESu to promote the Brasília meeting have already been discussed above. It is nevertheless worth recalling that the state bureaucracy itself reflects, within its own structure, the contradictions present in society as a whole and that, by virtue of these contradictions, it becomes possible, under certain historical circumstances, for non-hegemonic conceptions to gain ground. Hence the possibility that a meeting officially sponsored by the State might produce results contrary to the objectives of that very State, which remained a National Security State, albeit in a new phase of hegemonic recomposition.³⁸

Jornal do Brasil, in turn, was no less forceful in criticizing the content of both *Documento do Rio de Janeiro* and *Documento de Brasília*. In an editorial dated February 28, 1982, it stated:

³⁶ Original: “diretamente empenhados nessa empreitada a Secretaria de Ensino Superior e a Capes, que se incluíam entre as autoridades máximas do segundo Escalão do Ministério da Educação”.

³⁷ In fact, *Documento do Rio de Janeiro* lists as sponsors of that meeting Sesu, CAPES, and CNPq (Return..., 1981, p. 1). From this, however, to infer – as Paim does – the State’s assent to the theses advanced by the participants is a very different matter.

³⁸ For a discussion of the relations between the State and the opposition in the post-1964 period – relations that oscillated between phases of heightened repression and moments of greater political opening, according to the needs of reconstituting the hegemony of dominant groups – see Alves (1984).

Secondary school teachers, gathered at a congress, approved a motion calling for this return to philosophy to adopt as its method a “critical philosophy,” oriented toward everyday realities. That same theme now appears, as if by miracle, conveyed by MEC agencies that relied on a small handful of consultants. These consultants not only endorse the motion but unfold it into suggestions for future philosophy classes. All very democratic, as is customary in the current MEC administration. And these are merely suggestions, still to be debated later. Yet it is impossible to avoid a feeling of strangeness. (*Filosofia Dirigida...*, 1982, p. 10)³⁹

The editorial continues:

That philosophy must be critical was already known by Socrates in Athens. Philosophy is not a finished system of ideas – as some thinkers, perhaps overly confident in themselves, would have it. But one sometimes has the impression, when reading the document now embraced by the MEC, that the critique it proposes to exercise already comes loaded with a particular meaning; that it carefully chooses the direction in which it is to be exercised. (*Filosofia Dirigida...*, 1982, p. 10)⁴⁰

³⁹ Original: “*Professores secundários, reunidos em congresso, aprovaram moção para que este retorno à filosofia adotasse como método uma ‘filosofia crítica’, voltada para as realidades do dia-a-dia. Essa mesma temática aparece agora, como por milagre, veiculada por órgãos do MEC que se valeram de um pequeno punhado de consultores. Esses consultores não apenas endossam a moção, como a desdobram em sugestões para as futuras aulas de filosofia. Tudo muito democrático, como é costume da atual administração do MEC. E trata-se apenas de sugestões, a serem ainda posteriormente debatidas. Mas é impossível evitar uma sensação de estranheza.*”

⁴⁰ Original: “*Que a filosofia deve ser crítica, já o sabia Sócrates em Atenas. A filosofia não é um sistema acabado de ideias- como quiseram pensadores que se tinham talvez em excessiva conta. Mas tem-se às vezes a impressão, lendo o documento agora encampado pelo MEC, que a crítica que se pretende exercer já vem ali, carregada de um determinado sentido; que ela escolhe cuidadosamente a direção em que vai exercer-se.*”

What troubled the *Jornal do Brasil*, therefore, was the concern over a particular direction that philosophical critique might take – more specifically, the direction associated with Marxism and Liberation Theology. Commenting on the thematic outline proposed in the *Documento de Brasília*, the newspaper stated:

In all this, there is not a single reference to the possible use of ideology as the opium of intellectuals; nor any suggestion that the corrosion of Marxism's intellectual seriousness be examined. The "concrete examples" do not mention the crisis in Eastern Europe. By contrast, *Discernment and Politics*, a work by the Jesuit João Batista Libânio, an organizer of the Basic Ecclesial Communities and a prominent Liberation theologian, is recommended twice as a work worthy of reading. (Filosofia Dirigida..., 1982, p. 10)⁴¹

The editorial concludes by stating: "There should be greater care so that the incandescent virus of politics does not prevent contact with some of the eternal flowers of human intelligence." (Filosofia Dirigida..., 1982, p. 10)^{42 43}

It thus becomes evident that, for *Jornal do Brasil*, philosophy and politics should be dissociated, since the latter allegedly compromises the

⁴¹ Original: "Em tudo isso, nem uma referência à eventual utilização da ideologia como ópio dos intelectuais; nem uma sugestão de que se examine a corrosão da seriedade intelectual do marxismo. Os 'exemplos concretos' não mencionam a crise do Leste Europeu. Em compensação, *Discernimento e Política*, obra do jesuíta João Batista Libânio, articulador das Comunidades Eclesiais de Base e conspícuo teólogo da Libertação, vem recomendado duas vezes como obra que merece leitura."

⁴² Original: "Deveria haver mais cuidado para que o vírus incandescente da política não impedisse o contato com algumas das flores eternas da inteligência humana".

⁴³ About those "eternal flowers", Marilena Chaui (1985, p. 22), discussing Philosophy role in high school, count as necessary: "to avoid 'pragmatical' myopia (and the rest is history, as everyone knows,) but also avoid an empty parnassianism by saying that 'Philosophy is a growing plantation of eternal flowers of integrity' (poetically, indeed, the beauty of flowers relies on it's ephemerality...)." Original: "Evitar a miopia 'pragmática' (que deu no que deu, como todos sabem), mas também evitar parnassianismo ôco ao dizer que a 'filosofia é o cultivo das flores eternas da inteligência' (poeticamente, aliás, a beleza das flores está em serem efêmeras...)."

former. Such a stance, however, is itself political, insofar as it effectively deprives young people of contact with an essential dimension of the reality in which they live, thereby contributing to their alienation. In short, it is *Jornal do Brasil* that practices the very political partiality it imputes to the *Documento de Brasília*.

Concern over Marxist influence becomes even more evident in the words of Adirson de Barros, a columnist for the newspaper *Última Hora*, whose paranoia reaches proportions comparable only to the degree of inconsistency of his arguments.

The document prepared by Marxist professors and which will be approved later this month proposes, in Draft C, the programmatic outlines, in which readers will be able to clearly note communist infiltration in philosophy teaching and, moreover, in the country's educational program. In reality, it is no longer a matter of infiltration at this point, but of command exercised by Marxist teachers who carry out an important mission, namely, directing education toward Marxism and toward contestation of the current democratic system. (Barros, 1982, [s. p.])⁴⁴

Barros (1982) then proceeds to challenge the themes and authors indicated by the Document, among them João Batista Libânio, Maria Tereza Nidelcoff, Ruben Alves, Carlos Rodrigues Brandão, and Bárbara Freitag – whom he claims are unknown; Paulo Freire, whom he describes as a “communist, author of famous Marxist primers in the days of Arraes, today an adviser to D. Arns,” and as lacking “intellectual qualification.” He also criticizes the recommendation of “subversive documents such as those of the CNBB and Editora Vozes,” as well as those of the Centro de Estudos

⁴⁴ Original: “O documento preparado por professores marxistas e que será aprovado ainda este mês propõe na Minuta C, os roteiros programáticos, nos quais os leitores poderão notar claramente a infiltração comunista no ensino da filosofia e, de resto, no programa educacional do País. Na realidade não se trata mais de infiltração, a esta altura; mas de comando exercido por mestres marxistas que cumprem uma missão importante, qual seja, a de dirigir o ensino para os rumos do marxismo e da contestação ao sistema democrático atual.”

Bíblicos (CEBI) (Center for Biblical Studies) and the Instituto de Estudo de Religião (ISER) (Institute for the Study of Religion), “entities dominated by the left, according to the government.”

Despite the superficiality of Barros’s criticisms, some merit may nonetheless be attributed to them insofar as they reveal, with crystalline clarity, that the principal concern of the most conservative sectors regarding the return of Philosophy to upper-secondary education lay in the risk that its teaching might become a vehicle for the dissemination of Marxist ideas. Even if such a risk was neither real nor significant, it was necessary to emphasize it as a precautionary measure and as a means of legitimizing the repressive action of the National Security State in the educational sphere.

The Conjunto de Pesquisa Filosófica (Conpefil) (Philosophical Research Consortium) also expressed its views on the *Documento de Brasília*. On March 23, 1982, Father Stanislaus Ladusãns, president of the organization, sent to the Ministry of Education the results of a “comprehensive analysis” of the considerations presented therein, recommending the return of Philosophy to upper-secondary education. However, Conpefil’s study diverged radically from the orientations set forth in the Document, asserting that “there is no unity or authenticity in its conception of philosophy, in addition to suggesting texts that bear no relation to Brazilian reality, while omitting Brazilian philosophers and thinkers.” (Estudo..., 1982, p. 15)⁴⁵

Conpefil’s true concern becomes even more evident in the passage in which it states that the “complex set of problems” experienced by young people “requires the active presence of philosophy in secondary schools, specifically in the form of a philosophy of life adapted to the students’ mental level.” It emphasizes, however, that the subject loses its formative value when it turns into ideology. For this reason, according to Ladusãns (Estudo..., 1982, p. 15), it “must be preserved from any and all ideological

⁴⁵ Original: “*não há, nele, unidade e autenticidade na concepção da filosofia, além de sugerir textos que não se relacionam com a realidade brasileira, omitindo filósofos e pensadores brasileiros.*”

contamination, from deforming influences.”⁴⁶ What is thus proposed, it would seem, is the teaching of an angelic, pure, impartial philosophy – one that is, nevertheless, impossible to practice by human beings.

The position of Fr. Stanislaus Ladusães, together with that of other representatives of the so-called “conservative wing” of the Catholic Church, who likewise opposed the thrust of the proposal contained in the *Documento de Brasília*, can be understood in light of the fact that the theme of religion was addressed in the document from a theoretical perspective more closely aligned with Liberation Theology, adopted by the so-called “progressive wing” of Christianity, and therefore at odds with the orientation embraced by the former.⁴⁷

Faithful to its conception of an angelic philosophy, Conpefil suggested as programmatic content a brief general introduction and “a concise and engaging study of elements of Formal Logic and Metaphysics, among other dimensions that should be present in the subject.”

Conpefil also submitted to the Ministry of Education a study by Professor Iulo Brandão, from the Centro de Lógica e Epistemologia (Center for Logic and Epistemology) at Unicamp, in which it was recommended that the history of philosophical doctrines should not be restricted to the chronological exposition of philosophical systems, but should instead privilege a thematic approach. “In this way, students will have the opportunity to distinguish the History of Philosophy from Philosophy proper, with its ever-present themes.” (Estudo..., 1982, p. 15)⁴⁸

The Department of Philosophy at the Universidade de São Paulo (USP) likewise responded to the Ministry of Education’s request by submitting suggestions concerning the *Documento de Brasília*. In its statement, philosophy professors and students reiterated the urgent need to

⁴⁶ Original: “*deve ser preservada de toda e qualquer contaminação ideológica, de influências deformantes.*”

⁴⁷ Regarding this aspect, see “Experiência Religiosa,” (Religious Experience) proposed in *Documento de Brasília*.

⁴⁸ Original: “*Desta forma, o aluno terá oportunidade de diferenciar a História da Filosofia da Filosofia propriamente dita, com seus temas sempre presentes.*”

reinstate the subject in upper-secondary education and presented several proposals for implementing the measure: that classes be offered in at least two grade levels, with two hours per week; that the subject be compulsory; that teachers be duly qualified (licensed teachers, holders of bachelor's degrees, graduate degree holders, graduate students, and undergraduate students in philosophy programs) and approved through public competitive examinations; and that they enjoy autonomy in designing course syllabi, provided that they ensure coverage of a broad range of subject areas comprising the subject (Theory of Knowledge, Logic, Philosophy of Science, Philosophy of Language, Ethics, and Political Philosophy). In effect, the Department of Philosophy at USP merely added some practical details and did not substantially diverge from the orientations of the *Documento de Brasília* (Universidade De São Paulo..., 1982, [s. n. t.]).

As justification for including the subject, the document invoked the need for the “democratization of culture,” alongside the “democratization of Brazilian society,” a theme that at that moment was “on the agenda.” It also warned of the failure of compulsory vocationalization in Upper-secondary education brought about by Law No. 5,692/1971, which, among other consequences, had led to the restriction of humanistic education, with evident harm to students (Universidade De São Paulo..., 1982, [s. n. t.]).

Finally, the Department of Philosophy at USP made a point of clarifying that, considering the “state of degradation in which education currently finds itself,” philosophy could not be regarded as a “panacea” or as an attempt to “reshape chaos.” Rather, “the task of rethinking the educational system and reflecting on national issues does not fall exclusively to philosophers, but to everyone, distributed across all fields of knowledge and throughout the entire community.” (Universidade de São Paulo..., 1982, [s. n. t.])⁴⁹

The newspaper *O Estado de S. Paulo* also did not spare criticism of the *Documento de Brasília*. In late May 1982, nearly six months after the text's

⁴⁹ Original: “quadro de degradação em que se encontra o ensino”; “tábua de salvação”; “tentativa de remodelar o caos”; “a tarefa de repensar o sistema educacional e de pensar os temas nacionais não cabe exclusivamente aos filósofos, mas a todos, distribuindo-se por todas as áreas do saber e por toda a comunidade”.

dissemination, when commenting on the growing expressions of support for the reintroduction of Philosophy into upper-secondary education, it stated with a certain sense of relief in an editorial: “It is no longer a matter of the ideological project elaborated in the basements of the Ministry of Education [...]”. Pointing, by way of example, to the positions of the Association of Catholic Philosophers, which defended the non-compulsory status of Philosophy, and of the Department of Philosophy at USP, which proposed compulsory implementation beginning in 1983, the editorial concluded that there had been “effective progress in the discussion of the issue, with the condemnation of ideological purposes that visibly informed the Ministry of Education’s original proposal...” (A Filosofia no currículo..., 1982)⁵⁰

Despite this relief and the acknowledgment of such “progress,” approximately one year later the same newspaper once again warned of the “danger of ideologization” that the return of Philosophy might represent. In another editorial dated May 15, 1983, despite announcing that it would no longer insist on the matter, it devoted – just in case – nearly half of the text to revisiting it, even invoking the rather ill-advised statements of João Villalobos and Ruy Nunes. *O Estado de S. Paulo* stated:

We will not insist on the danger of the ideologization of secondary education, which (absurd as this may be, since philosophy is the very opposite of ideology) the reintroduction of the subject might represent; we will not insist on the matter, even while bearing in mind the possibility – given the general lack of preparation of students and of most presumed teachers – that, in the words of Professor João Villalobos, it could end up turning the school into a kind of “grassroots philosophical community”; we will not insist on the issue, even though we are aware, as Professor Ruy Nunes puts it, that “the greatest threat to the failure of philosophy teaching lies in second-rate teachers, the zealots of revolutionary catchphrases,” for “it is

⁵⁰ Original: “Já não se trata do projeto ideológico elaborado nos subterrâneos do MEC [...]”; “um progresso efetivo na discussão do assunto, com a condenação de propósitos ideológicos que informavam visivelmente a proposta primitiva do MEC...”

preferable to have no philosophy teaching in secondary schools than to have it taught by these malevolent traffickers of youthful minds. (A Filosofia e o ensino..., 1983, p. 3)⁵¹ ⁵²

Indeed, the accusation – or at least the suspicion – that Philosophy might lend itself to ideological indoctrination – read: Marxist indoctrination – was one of the main arguments put forward by opponents of its return to secondary education.⁵³

Conclusion

Considering the foregoing, I hope to have succeeded in highlighting the importance of the I ENDF and of its main outcome, the *Documento de Brasília*, in the struggle for the return of Philosophy to secondary education

⁵¹ Original: “Não vamos insistir no perigo da ideologização do ensino secundário, que (por absurdo que isso seja, já que a filosofia é o avesso da ideologia) pode representar a reintrodução da matéria no curso, não vamos insistir no assunto, embora tendo presente a possibilidade, pelo despreparo geral de alunos e da maioria dos presumíveis docentes, que, na expressão do professor João Villalobos, pode acabar convertendo a escola numa espécie de ‘comunidade filosófica de base’; não vamos insistir no tema, embora conscientes, como o professor Ruy Nunes, de que ‘a grande ameaça para o malogro do ensino da filosofia são os professores de fãncaria, os energúmenos dos chavões revolucionários’, pois que é preferível não haver ensino da filosofia nas escolas de 2º grau a tê-la ministrada por esses malévolos traficantes das mentes juvenis.”

⁵² Regarding Villalobos’s position, the editorial refers to statements he made to *Jornal da Tarde* in April of that same year, in which he declared: “If philosophy is to return to secondary education, given Brazilian conditions and our general lack of preparation – both among teachers and students – the impression is that it could turn into a kind of grassroots philosophical community. To say that Brazil is an underdeveloped country, marked by oppressors and oppressed, one does not need philosophy” (A FILOSOFIA de volta... *Jornal da Tarde*, São Paulo, 14 apr. 1983, s. p.).

Original: “Se for para voltar a filosofia ao 2º grau, dadas as condições brasileiras, a nossa falta geral de preparo, tanto de professores como de alunos, a impressão é que pode virar uma comunidade filosófica de base. Para dizer que o Brasil é um país subdesenvolvido, onde há opressores e oprimidos, não precisa fazer filosofia.”

⁵³ Regarding this matter, see Silveira. (1991)

in the post-1964 context. This meeting marked a new phase in that struggle, which from then on acquired greater organization and coordination, achieving national scope. Moreover, the dissemination of its theses – later refined by the Brasília consultants – allowed underlying contradictions to surface and broadened the debate surrounding Philosophy teaching.

In the current context, the reform of secondary education (Law No. 13,415/2017), combined with the National Common Curricular Base, has drastically reduced the number of Philosophy classes. This represents a concrete threat that students may once again be deprived of philosophical education, which is indispensable for their preparation for the critical exercise of citizenship. In this scenario, it may not be a bad idea to revive meetings of Philosophy departments and programs, also involving university students and basic education teachers, in order to collectively plan strategies of struggle to ensure the effective presence of Philosophy in the curriculum, under adequate conditions – something that would, of course, also require the revocation of the aforementioned reform.

Naturally, such a revival would need to be adapted to present-day conditions. This would include, for example, incorporating into the discussions issues that were not yet on the agenda – or at least not as prominently – in the 1980s, such as: the erasure of women from the history of philosophy, which reduces the teaching of the subject largely to the exposition of the thought of one or two dozen white men from four or five European countries and the United States; the Eurocentrism that still governs the criteria for selecting authors and theories, excluding a vast body of philosophical production by African, Asian, and Latin American intellectuals; and the racism, sexism, and other forms of prejudice and discrimination present in the thought of various philosophers, which are generally ignored – or concealed – by Philosophy textbooks and manuals. This omission hinders both a fuller understanding of these authors' thought and students' reflection on the relationship between philosophy and prejudice.

Certainly, long-standing and recurring issues will also need to be revisited in light of the new circumstances in which they now present themselves: the number of weekly classes and the minimum workload

required for the effective learning of Philosophy; the hiring of properly qualified teachers through public competitive examinations; new teaching methodologies and the rich and diverse range of teaching materials currently available in various formats; and the use of educational technologies to support instruction, among others. Moreover, it may be unavoidable to address the issue of ideological indoctrination, so often and fallaciously associated with Philosophy teaching. Especially with the emergence of the *Escola Sem Partido* (Nonpartisan School) movement – whose positions were openly embraced and promoted by the government of Jair Bolsonaro and by its Ministry of Education – this debate extended beyond the realm of the humanities, where it had traditionally been confined, and came to affect basic education as a whole. It is therefore necessary, following the example set by the participants in the movement for the return of Philosophy to upper-secondary education, to demonstrate that the study of this subject is not a means of indoctrination but, on the contrary, an antidote to it. As emphasized in the *Documento de Brasília*:

Philosophy may present itself as an analysis and articulation of human, cultural, scientific, and socio-political experience aimed at a comprehensive understanding of the meaning of historical existence. This experience differs according to the time and space in which individuals and societies develop. Modes of philosophical inquiry also differ. According to the approach presented here, the philosopher seeks to organize the overall meaning and coherence of the natural and cultural events that surround them, *denouncing ideological obstacles* that divert or delay the processes of freedom, sociability, prosperity, and democratic coexistence among peoples and cultures. In short, Philosophy seeks to awaken in young people and adults a critical reading of the world in which they live. (History..., 1981, p. 3, emphasis added)⁵⁴

⁵⁴ Original: “A Filosofia pode apresentar-se como análise e articulação da experiência humana, cultural, científica e sócio-política visando a compreensão global do sentido da existência histórica. Esta experiência diferencia-se segundo o tempo e o espaço em que

Only those who disagree with the need to foster such a critical reading of the world among young people – or who aspire to the figure of a capitulated teacher, to use Pegoraro’s expression, one committed to maintaining the *status quo* – can confuse the Philosophy teaching, as presented in the documents analyzed here, with indoctrination. This confusion, whether conscious or unconscious, itself expresses an ideological stance. For such individuals, a well-behaved and politically aseptic philosophy – as if that were possible! – detached from the concrete problems of the country and from the existential needs of adolescents and young people, may be preferable. In that case, however, we would no longer be speaking of philosophy, nor advocating the construction of a truly democratic society open to diversity. Perhaps, then, asking what kind of society we wish to live in is a good starting point for discussing the necessity and role of Philosophy in upper-secondary education.

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crecem as pessoas e as sociedades. Diferentes são também as modalidades de abordagem filosófica. Segundo o modo aqui apresentado, o filósofo procura organizar o sentido e a coerência globais dos eventos naturais e culturais que o cercam, denunciando os entraves ideológicos que desviam ou retardam o processo da liberdade, sociabilidade, prosperidade e convivência democrática entre os povos e as culturas. Numa palavra, a Filosofia visa a despertar nos jovens e adultos uma leitura crítica do mundo em que vivem.”

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