

# Teaching of Sociology and political education: a review of the concepts of *politics*, *power* and *State* from textbooks<sup>1</sup>

*André da Rocha Santos*<sup>2</sup>

## ABSTRACT

In the broader context of a discussion about politics as a social practice, the knowledge and knowledge of political sociology and political science in the Sociology books of the National Textbook Program (PNLD) is discussed. Analyzing each of the five works, the concepts of *politics*, *power* and *State* are examined in order to understand which theories and themes were more precisely related to these concepts in the last edition of the PNLD. In addition to the study itself, the objective of this work is to highlight the importance of textbooks as an important instrument for the democratization of knowledge and political education within the scope of popular education.

**KEYWORDS:** Teaching sociology; Political science; Political education ; Concepts; Textbook.

*Ensino de sociologia e educação política: uma revisão dos conceitos de política, poder e Estado a partir dos livros didáticos*

## RESUMO

No contexto mais amplo de uma discussão acerca da política enquanto prática social discute-se os saberes e conhecimentos de sociologia política e ciência política nos livros de Sociologia do Programa Nacional do Livro Didático (PNLD). Analisando cada uma das cinco obras, os conceitos de *política*, *poder* e *Estado* são examinados buscando compreender quais

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<sup>1</sup> English version by Gabriela Dessotti Perin. E-mail: [gabissttperin@gmail.com](mailto:gabissttperin@gmail.com).

<sup>2</sup>PhD in Sociology. Instituto Federal de São Paulo, Registro, São Paulo, Brasil. Orcid. <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8085-5305>. E-mail: [andrerochasantos@ifsp.edu.br](mailto:andrerochasantos@ifsp.edu.br).

teorias e temas estiveram de forma mais precisa relacionados a esses conceitos na última edição do PNLD. Além do estudo em si, é objetivo deste trabalho salientar a importância do livro didático como importante instrumento de democratização do saber e de educação política no âmbito da educação popular.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** Ensino de sociologia; Ciência política; Educação política; Conceitos; Livro didático.

*Enseñanza de la sociología y la educación política: una revisión de los conceptos de política, poder y Estado desde los libros de texto.*

### RESUMEN

En el contexto más amplio de una discusión sobre la política como práctica social, se discute el saber y saber de la sociología política y la ciencia política en los libros de Sociología del Programa Nacional de Libros de Texto (PNLD). Analizando cada una de las cinco obras, se examinan los conceptos de *política, poder y Estado* para comprender qué teorías y temas se relacionaron con mayor precisión con estos conceptos en la última edición del PNLD. Además del estudio en sí, el objetivo de este trabajo es resaltar la importancia de los libros de texto como un importante instrumento para la democratización del conocimiento y la educación política en el ámbito de la educación popular.

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** Enseñanza de la sociología; La ciencia política; Educación política; Conceptos; Libro de texto.

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*I believe that the progressive teacher has never needed to be as cautious as today in the face of the cunning with which the dominant ideology insinuates the neutrality of education. From this point of view, which is reactionary, the pedagogical space, neutral par excellence, is one in which students are trained for apolitical practices, as if the human way of being in the world were or could be a neutral way. My presence as a teacher, which cannot go unnoticed by students in the classroom and at school, is a political presence in itself. As a presence, I cannot be an omission, but a subject of choices. I must reveal to students my ability to analyze, compare, evaluate, decide, choose and break. My ability to do justice, not to fail the truth. Ethical, for this reason, must be my testimony.*

Paulo Freire

## Introduction

“The young Brazilian is not interested in politics”. “He is an alienated!”. Frequently, we hear phrases like these in our daily life, for example, said by common sense in the family, at school and in the media. But, is that really the case? Or, is there, designedly, a stimulus to disinterest and confusion of concepts and values in order to make the young unaware of social, politics, economics and cultural issues around them, allowing the debate to be monopolized by certain individuals, groups and social classes?

Politics as a social practice faces a serious crisis in which two characteristics become evident: on the one hand, *repulsion*, on the other, *curiosity*. On the side of *repulsion* – which used to be the solution – now it appears as part of the problem to be tackled. It has evolved from “the process by which access to the exercise of power is obtained and, through it, to the organization of collective life in a given society” (Miguel, 2018, our translation), to something to be despised, denied. Indifference towards politics has become a sort of fashion brand, a proof of a “modern attitude”, “advanced” (Nogueira, 2001).

This disappointment takes on even greater proportions when it reaches the hearts and minds of those who could be the great authors of this reconstruction: the youth. By targeting the hope and utopia of youth, disillusionment hits a dangerous target that drags democracy as a universal, generous and inclusive value down, in contrast to an authoritarian thinking that gains stature and strength.

Ridenti (2011), almost foreseeing what would happen, outlined a political panorama of this context:

Worse, when indignation appears, it tends to be channeled towards anti-democratic targets: support for the death penalty, closure of the National Congress, persecution of poor migrants, and so on. The greatest risk is that disillusionment with politicians and politics will result in support for a coup d'état, to supposedly restore order and morality. Those with some knowledge in history know that this outcome is common, but in the medium and long term, it only worsens the political situation. For example, the coup leaders of 1964 in Brazil claimed to intend to safeguard democratic order, eliminate corruption and reestablish morality in the country. However, they bequeathed the opposite of what they claimed to intend (Ridenti, 2011, p. 06, our translation).

In the side of *curiosity*, even in a disconnected and intricate manner, in recent years there has been a noticeable increase in young people's interest in political issues. Stimulated by the internet through its various forms of communication in the social media and amidst a climate of polarization and political instability started by the protests of June 2013, young people born in the 21<sup>st</sup> century have been playing an increasingly significant role in these discussions.

However, stimulated by the incessant stream of information delivered to their palms through smartphones, valuable principals of the Rule of Law and Human Rights become mixed and confused in videos, articles, opinions and statements, which are often undemocratic and full of hate, prejudice and authoritarianism (Assumpção; Leonardi, 2017). In a tumultuous moment like the one we currently live, in which much is said "about" and "of" politics, it becomes evident how many people simply do not know what they are talking about. For the Brazilian youth in this context, there is the understanding of a shuffled, disorganized and chaotic game.

In that regard, the study of the role of Sociology in high school acquires a special significance. As emphasized by Martins (2013) and Sell (2015), Sociology is a science that involves a very strong political dimension, which reflects “on the relationship between theory and political practice, facing the difficult question of understanding and determining the connection between Sociology (as a sphere of knowledge) and politics (as a sphere of action)” (Sell, 2015, p. 27, our translation).

By opening up the possibility to question capitalist society and discuss topics such as social inequality, exploitation in labor relations, cultural industry, the limits of liberal-representative democracy or authoritarian political thought, among many other possible themes, for example, racism, gender discrimination or urban segregation, the social science provokes thinking about alternatives and, in some way, striving to change this social reality:

(...) sociology, from its beginning, has always been more than a mere attempt to reflect on modern society. Its explanations have always contained *practical intentions*, a strong desire to *intervene* in the course of this civilization. If scientific thought always corresponds to social life, in sociology this influence is particularly outstanding (Martins, 2023, p. 11, emphasis added, our translation).

Thus, the questions arise: what is the role of political knowledge and understanding in Brazilian schools? How should this content be approached in the school curriculum? With which concepts, themes or theories?

At school, basic notions of politics such as Citizenship, Democracy, Republic, Dictatorship, Liberalism, Socialism, Social Democracy, Neoliberalism, Social Movements, Political Parties and others are essential. The approach to understanding these themes and theories should support both teaching and learning. Similarly, fundamental concepts such as power, pluralism, equality, freedom, tolerance, ethics, public space, ideology, consensus, conflict, hegemony and utopia are necessary to clarify and comprehend the world around them.

The pursuit of this knowledge should be approached with the aim of raising students warned, including fostering their intellectual autonomy and critical thinking, and helping to construct their social and political identities. In other words, it should emphasize the practice of democracy, the legality and legitimacy of power, citizenship, rights and duties of citizens, social movements and other forms of participation. This approach values politics as a social practice that involves citizens in shaping the destiny of society.

Our contribution, in this sense, will be start by examining the concepts of *politics*, *power* and *State* in each of the five works of the 2018 edition of the National Textbook Program (Programa Nacional do Livro Didático – PNLD) for Sociology, its latest publication per subject. The choice of these three themes was due to their centrality in the social sciences, synthesizing key concepts of public debate in Brazilian society. The aim was to perceive the approach or divergence from various social and political theories (conservative, liberal, socialist, etc.), which can often be challenging for students to grasp.

The books under study were: *Tempos modernos, tempos de sociologia* (*Modern times, Sociology times*) (Bomeny et al., 2016), *Sociologia hoje* (*Sociology today*) (Machado; Amorim; Barros, 2016), *Sociologia* (*Sociology*) (Araújo; Bridi; Motim, 2016), *Sociologia em movimento* (*Sociology on the move*) (Silva et al., 2016) e *Sociologia para jovens do século XXI* (*Sociology for 21st century young people*) (Oliveira; Costa, 2016).

Lastly, we emphasize that in this brief analysis, we will equally refer to political sociology and to political science present in the textbooks. This choice is made because we consider that in reality, the transpositions of scientific knowledge related to political knowledge in textbooks is closer to the disciplinary field of political sociology than to the institutionalist political science predominant in Brazil over the last three decades (Limongi; Almeida; Freitas, 2016).

This option is grounded particularly in the studies of Perissinotto (2004) and Botelho (2019) on political sociology and in the prevailing that the National Textbook Program-Sociology (PNLD) textbooks have followed a similar path. That is, they aim to link politics and society, seeking to specify the social foundations and social dynamics of politics originating from Brazilian social formation (Botelho, 2019). This examination consistently considers the interdependence between the social, economic, political and cultural, which did not presuppose the notion of the state's autonomy from society as if it "operates in a social vacuum" (Perissinotto, 2004, p. 212).

### **About textbooks and national political situation**

Since the inclusion of Sociology as a discipline in the Brazilian high school curriculum, following the advent of the Law 11.684/2008, to the sciences has been imposed the challenge of didactic transposition of knowledge deemed suitable and necessary for our students. As far as that rewarded decades of discussions and debates among intellectuals, entities, professional organizations and social movements for the definitive reintroduction of the discipline into the national curriculum, it also "challenged the Brazilian sociological field to cross the true abyss which separates it from the reality of high school" (BRAGA, 2009, p. 163, our translation).

Thus, in the following years, the production of materials, textbooks, seminars, meetings and academic research began discussing which contents should be included, through which authors, using which approaches and theories, both sociological, anthropological, political and educational. Government bodies such as the Ministry of Education (Ministério da Educação – MEC), State Departments of Education and civil society institutions such as universities and research centers started debating what, how and why certain issues should be taught, as well as the challenge of transposing academic knowledge into school knowledge (Meucci; Bezerra, 2014).

Our intent here becomes even more necessary as with the 2016 coup, the national and educational context changed significantly with the rise of a hegemonic right-wing bloc that came to power with Michel Temer (2016-2018) and radicalized this vision during the far-right government of Jair Bolsonaro (2019-2022), very similarly to what Apple (2002) termed as a new conservative alliance composed of neoliberals, neoconservatives, the new professional middle class and authoritarian populists.

In the field of education, the support of the former President of the Republic and his ministers of Education for the organization Escola Sem Partido (ESP) was notable. The aforementioned organization presents a proposal to combat an alleged “marxist indoctrination” carried out by teachers in the classroom. However, in reality, it manifests as attempt to muzzle and intimidate educators through the authoritarian imposition of a single liberal-conservative thought which aims to silence critical, democratic and pluralistic thinking (Miguel, 2016; O Globo, 2019).

The objective of ESP is quite clear: to censor any kind of critical approach to the content and to foster the confusion of concepts with the aim of making the new generations repulse politics and democracy. In addition, it seeks to prevent them from being aware of the social, political, economic and cultural issues that surround them, so that the debate can be monopolized and conducted by these same organized groups.

In this sense, the high school reform (Law n° 13.414, from February 2017) and the Base Nacional Curricular Comum – BNCC (Common National Curriculum Base), also for high school, approved in December 2018, deepen this trend with measures such as the promotion of distance learning, the reduction of overall training workload, the failure to guarantee the mandatory provision of the five training itineraries in all schools and states, nor the thirteen curricular components in force until then (guaranteeing only the subjects of Portuguese Language and Mathematics).



The other subjects, such as History, Geography, Chemistry, Physics, Biology, Philosophy or Sociology would appear within the knowledge areas in an interdisciplinary way, which, in practice, decreed the end of specific textbooks for these subjects.

Thus, the analysis of the Sociology textbooks from the 2018 National Textbook Program – PNLD – (2018-2019-2020 triennium) remains a historical record of a public policy aimed at access and democratization of essential content, which sought to reach the top in public and popular schools, so combated and attacked.

## **Analysis of textbooks**

### ***Tempos modernos, tempos de sociologia* (Bomeny et al, 2016)**

The book *Tempos modernos, tempos de sociologia*, written by Helena Bomey, Bianca Freire-Medeiros, Raquel Balmant Emerique and Julia O'Donnell, gave rise to a movie which is called *Tempos modernos* (1936), by Charles Chaplin, as a theme and setting for the emergence of Sociology as a field of knowledge. The movie serves as a methodological tool, acting as a bridge between the discipline's knowledge and the students' understanding (Desterro, 2016).

Chapter 4, “Saber sobre as astúcias e as manhãs da política” (“Knowing about the intricacies of mornings of politics”), is the section that presents the knowledge and understanding of political sociology/political science. Although there is no explicit definition of politics, its importance in contemporary life is emphasized: “it concerns the act of governing, exercising power, conquering, and also participating, agreeing, resisting or fighting. There are actions, decisions and movements directed toward the exercise of power” (p. 55, our translation).

The Chapter relates the concept of politics to institutionalism, State maintenance and power relationships. Right at the beginning, the discussion is introduced with the image of Thomas Hobbes' work

*Leviathan* and a debate based on Niccolò Machiavelli, an author who, besides advocating the separation of politics and religion, inaugurated a more realistic perspective, according to which political ethics have their own characteristics.

In the same Chapter, the concept of power as the ability to impose the will of a group/person over the others, according to Max Weber's conception, is used to discuss why individuals obey, starting with a debate on legitimacy. It discusses, for example, the types of domination (rational, charismatic and traditional). In Chapter 10, "As muitas faces do poder" ("The many faces of power"), Michel Foucault is used to discuss the relationships between truth and power, discipline, control institutions, the study of abnormalities and biopower (Souza, 2017).

The debate around the State is fundamentally based on Machiavelli and the contractualist authors (Thomas Hobbes, John Locke and Jean-Jacques Rousseau), used to discuss the political organization of society. When discussing the political phenomenon using Machiavelli, this is reference to State: "The purpose of politics would be the maintenance of the State. Therefore, everything related to the functioning of the State – acts of governing, obeying, managing conflicts and representing – pertained to the functioning of politics" (p. 55, our translation).

The box "Teorias contratualistas ou teorias do contrato social" ("Contractualist Theory of Theories of Social Contract") seeks to discuss the origin of social order and politics, positioning contractualism as a philosophical current that emerged in Antiquity and "crossed the Medieval Period". It was in Modernity that it could contribute to the development of political science.

The central idea of contractualist thought is that political order arises from a foreseen agreement established among individuals, in order to avoid further damage or guarantee peace. This agreement is known as the Social Contract. It implies that, hypothetically, there exists a sort of antisocial or apolitical life before the contract – a

moment defined by contractualists as the state of nature. With the contract, the state of nature disappears and civil society (*civitas*, “State”, “political organization”) emerges (Bomeny et al, 2016, p. 56).

In this sense, we agree with Schnekenberg (2017), who emphasizes the presence of other chapters that mention the State, but do not have Political Science as the central theme. An example is the discussion on social inequality and the Welfare State, presented in Chapter 18, “Desigualdades de várias ordens” (“Inequalities of various order”), and Chapter 20, “Violência, crime e justiça no Brasil” (“Violence, Crime and Justice in Brazil”), which discusses violence in Brazil by examining the concept of the monopoly on the legitimate use of physical force within specific territory, based on the presence and/or absence of the State in areas where the logic of violent sociability prevails.

### ***Sociologia hoje* (Machado; Amorim; Barros, 2016)**

The work *Sociologia hoje* was written by Igor José de Renó Machado, Henrique Amorim and Celso Rocha de Barros, which presents the main conceptual and methodological issues that underpin the three reference sciences separately, dividing the book into three equal parts: Unit 1 – “Cultura” (“Culture), Unit 2 – “Sociedade” (“Society”) and Unit 3 – “Poder e cidadania” (“Power and Citizenship”), the latter focused on the specificity of Political Science.

In the presentation of Unit 3, the concept of politics is highlighted as “the art of determining how we will live together, reconcile our interests and establish rules of living together” (Machado; Amorim; Barros, 2016, p. 249, our translation). Chapter 11 “Política, poder e Estado” (“Politics, power and State”) which opens the unit, refers to Max Weber to explain the three terms that give the chapter its name. The conceptualization of politics is developed using the German author, according to whom “the center of political activity

is the pursuit of power” and “politics is the struggle to participate in power of influence its distribution” (p. 251, our translation).

In the work, power is described as “the possibility of imposing one’s own will, even against the will of others” (p. 251, our translation). In Chapter 15, “Temas contemporâneos da Ciência Política” (“Contemporary themes in Political Science”), a new view of power is highlighted based on the work of Michel Foucault and his contribution to think about disciplinary power, micro-power, as well as new dimensions of power beyond the State.

In *Sociologia hoje* (Machado; Amorim; Barros, 2017), the concept of State is presented with a particular focus on one author: Max Weber. The monopoly of legitimate violence is thoroughly examined by the authors, including a direct quotation from Weber himself.

In an original approach compared to other textbooks, the American sociologist Charles Tilly is referenced to discuss the birth of the Modern State related to wars: “when they emerged, Modern States were not very different from criminal gangs that, in order to avoid attacking the people, taxed them” (p. 255, our translation). Similarly, Antonio Gramsci is invoked to clarify that in modern societies, the struggle for state power “is not exercised solely by the government, the police, the courts or by violence”. The struggle for power also involves the conquest of ideas, the production of culture and news in the process of striving for hegemony (leadership) of society (Machado; Amorim; Barros, 2016).

After a box featuring the profile of Machiavelli, the theme of the State concludes with the section “Os contratualistas: o que o Estado pode fazer?” (“The contractualists: what can the State do?”), in which the ideas of Hobbes, Locke and Rousseau are explained again, including a summary table on the three authors divided into three columns: What would life be like without the State? Why would the State be formed? And what could people expect from the State? It is notable in this work how only liberal political theory is considered, excluding other views,

from the conservative positivist/functionalist conception to socialist perspectives, both reformist and revolutionary. In fact, when Gramsci is briefly mentioned, he appears to be portrayed as a liberal.

Posteriorly, the concept of State is recaptured in Chapter 12, “Globalização e política” (“Globalizations and Politics”), which discusses the impact of globalization on the diminishing power of the State and the increasing importance of multinational corporations on the global stage.

### ***Sociologia* (Araújo; Bridi; Motim, 2016)**

The work *Sociologia*, from Silvia Maria de Araújo, Maria Aparecida Bridi and Benilde Lenzi Motim, discusses themes related to Politics in Chapter 8 “Cidadania, política e Estado” (“Citizenship, Politics and State”), in which politics is described merely as “dialogue”, “word” and “persuasion”, and it is through politics that human beings could transform their reality. However, later in the chapter, the concept is more thoroughly developed, and politics and power are again defined using Max Weber’s perspective. According to the authors – based on the book *Ciência e política: duas vocações* (*Science and Politics: two vocations*) (1919), “politics is the set of efforts made with a view to participate in power or influence the division of power, whether between States or within a single State” (p. 244, our translation), meaning that “politics relates to the power of the State and to individuals who aspire to obtain it” (Araújo; Bridi; Motim, 2016, p. 244, our translation).

The concept of power, grounded in the same German sociologist, is described as “the ability of an individual or a group of people to command a particular community or country” (p. 244, our translation), and Michel Foucault is referenced to demonstrate that “power is present in all social relationships, not just in the State” (p. 244, our translation). In an interesting way and, unfortunately, little explored in examples of concrete social practices, they point out how power is in everyday micro-relationships such as family, work, church, school and neighborhood.

According to the authors, the State is a social institution which allows – “or, in some situations, restrains” – the active participation of the citizens in the major decisions of society. Thus, political science studies the role of State and the tensions among collective and individual interests in this social institution (p. 229).

The relationship between State and society is highlighted, according to Machiavelli and the other contractualists such as Hobbes, Locke and Rousseau. By using Machiavelli’s thought, a reconstitution of the exercise of political power since the Modern Age with the political centralization undertaken by the Absolutist State is provided. Without citing a specific work, Max Weber is also employed to explain domination, which would only be legitimate if accepted by the dominated ones. In a box titled “Concepções de Estado e sociedade civil na Idade Moderna” (“Conceptions of State and Civil Society in the Modern Age”), the concept is presented based on Hobbes, Locke and Rousseau, relating – in an original way – the emergence of civil society with the bourgeoisie, a detail that escapes the other textbooks under study (Araújo; Bridi; Motim, 2013).

The textbook differs from the others in its definition of State, in which the authors bring other distinct interpretations from the Weberian comprehension. The Marxist view is present in a quote from Engels in the origin of family, property and State, in which power state is characterized as a product of society, and its role is dampening social conflicts and avoid clashes between classes, ensuring the capitalistic reproduction of the social system. In the text and in the box “Interpretações sobre a natureza do Estado” (“Interpretations on the Nature of the State”), other conceptions are briefly presented. Besides to Marx, Engels and Weber, Gramsci, Althusser, Poulantzas and the Brazilian sociologist Octavio Ianni complete the summary box (Araújo, Bridi; Motim, 2013).

***Sociologia em movimento* (Silva et al., 2016).**

The book *Sociologia em movimento*, written by several authors, especially, teachers from Colégio Pedro II, in Rio de Janeiro, discusses the themes reported here, in Chapter 6 “Poder, política e Estado” (“Power, politics and State”). In a brief definition, politics is highlighted as “the means by which an individual or a group organizes, exercises power or acquire it” (p. 139, our translation). Later in the chapter, the topic is revisited from the perspective of ancient Greece, the etymology of the word and the context of the Greek City-State, including a reference to Aristotle as the proponent of the conception of politics from his work of the same name and, once again, Weber, as the modern definer of the concept after the liberal revolutions of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

With the definition of power, after the predictable Weberian understanding “the probability of imposing one’s own will in a social relationship, even against the resistance of others” (p. 139, our translation), there is an interesting typology of the forms of exercising power, based on the Italian philosopher Norberto Bobbio: economic power, ideological power and political power. Subsequently, the authors address the issue of legitimate power and the forms of legitimate domination, that is, “the one in which the dominated ones accept the conditions under which the exercise of power takes place” (p. 142, our translation).

The issue of the State brought up by the authors introduces various elements of the state apparatus that are interesting for the teacher’s work. When characterizing the Modern State, they associate it with the rationalization of power management (administrative and bureaucratic structure) and relate this phenomenon to the liberal revolutions of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, notably the French Revolution. The forms of organization of the Modern State between monarchy and republic, the systems of government between presidentialism and parliamentarism, and the characteristics of the Nation-State: people, territory, government, purpose and sovereignty.

The use of classical or contemporary authors is absent in these conceptualizations, as well as in the explanation of political parties and electoral systems as forms of political participation.

In the section “As relações de poder na sociedade contemporânea” (“Power relationships in contemporary society”), the authors refer back to the historical conceptualization of the State. The theme is explored through the main historical forms of State in the West: Absolutist State, Liberal State, Socialist State, Nazi and Fascist State, Welfare State and Neoliberal State. The authors are used solely to characterize the different kind of States. Following the usual order of conceptualizations, the Absolutist State’s main reference is Hobbes and its major characteristics being the centralizations and despotism of power. In the Liberal State, Locke and Smith are the main ideologues of political and economic liberalism, respectively, and the rise of the bourgeoisie is its principal specificity.

The work made a theoretical choice not to distinguish between Political Theory (the idealized concept) and Political Science (focused strictly on formal institutions), thereby giving negative impression of certain theories, particularly socialism, which is conflated with its authoritarian deviation, the Stalinist State, yet presented as a socialist one. This mistake is evident in the subsequent characterizations of the Nazi and Fascist States as autonomous regimes, without being conceptualized as authoritarian deviations of the Liberal State. The Welfare State, advocated by Keynes and implemented post-World War II, and the Neoliberal State from the 1980s onwards complete the framework of the term’s definitions and historical use. The authors involved in the debate include Jhon Maynard Keynes, regarding the Welfare State, and Friedrich Hayek and Milton Friedman, concerning the Neoliberal State.

### ***Sociologia para jovens do século XXI (Oliveira; Costa, 2016)***

The book *Sociologia para jovens do século XXI*, by Luiz Fernandes de Oliveira and Cesar Rocha da Costa, presents elements of politics



distributed throughout the work. However, the categories more specifically linked to Politics Science are present in Chapter 14 “‘O Estado sou eu.’ Estado e democracia” (“‘The State is me’. State and Democracy”). Surely, it is the most left-learning book among the five under analysis, but it is also less concerned with rigor in terms of concepts and definitions.

In the work, there is no explicit explanation of the concept of politics. The most we can see, in this sense, is an attempt to associate politics with the State, political participation and democracy. In the same way, there is no concrete definition of the concept of power. The authors only refer to power as a State power and its relation to legitimacy and domination (Oliveira; Costa, 2016).

While the conceptions of politics and power could have been better developed, the theme of the State presents important contributions, if compared to other textbooks. Although it initially repeats the other works by defining the State from Weber’s perspective as an administrative apparatus which has the legitimate monopoly on force through dominations, it later brings Durkheim into the debate to show how the State exerts coercion over individuals, in addition to Marx and Engels:

According to this view, the State emerged, in the History of humanity, as a result of the existing conflict among antagonistic social classes. Thus, the State became a concrete necessity for the economically dominant classes, aiming for new means of political dominations, repression and exploitation of the oppressed classes (Oliveira; Costa, 2016, p. 200, our translation).

Therefore, the three classical authors of sociology are called upon to contribute to the phenomenon of the State, which is further explored in the same chapter by addressing the issues of democracy and Brazilian parties.

## Conclusion

The discussion around the essential concepts of Political Sociology/Political Science in the classroom within the Sociology discipline is an important topic in Brazilian public education and is currently at the center of a political dispute between discourses and interpretations of Brazil. In the division that the country currently finds itself in, different societal projects are in dispute. In the polarized confrontation – which impoverishes the debate and causes one interlocutor not to listen to the other – lies the majority of the Brazilian population, especially the youth who rely on the media and social networks as their main source of information.

On one side of this dispute, are those who advocate for critical thinking in the classroom and the development of a student with autonomous and independent knowledge who knows how to challenge and question their social situation and is capable of fighting for political, economic and cultural transformations in their life and in Brazilian society (Freire, 2014).

On the other side, there are those who advocate for a technical and “neutral” mindset, focused on preparing the student for the job market and aligned with a civic and conservative view of social life. That is, “an understanding of education limited to the transmission on factual ‘contents’, of which the teacher is a mere repeater, and the student, a passive receptacle” (Miguel, 2016, p. 617, our translation).

In a context in which, historically, the federative entities have not prioritized public school, low investments result in precarious infrastructure and maintenance of school units and low salaries for teachers. If these problems were not enough to make the teaching career undervalued by the public authorities and society – as evidenced by the low demand for the profession – in recent years, teachers have had to deal with a new difficulty: the criminalization of teaching profession due to the supposed “ideological bias” of the “cultural Marxism” in Brazilian schools, which has Sociology and Philosophy as the main targets (Folha de São Paulo, 2019c).

School sociology, besides all the difficulties it faced to become part of the list of subjects in Brazilian basic education, is now accused of engaging in politics in the classroom, of being leftist and its teacher promoting a “Marxist indoctrination”, whose main target would be the approach to gender issues, stigmatized as “gender ideology”. However, despite gender issues being the focus, the criminalization of teaching affects and prevents the professional activity from being exercised fully, leaving teachers at the mercy of extremely vague and subjective accusations of “ideological harassment” under the imposition of the elimination of freedom of expressive, encouraged by the Escola Sem Partido organization, teachers can be target for lawsuits at any time. Instead of being seen as educators, teachers come to be seen as a threat to be contained.

Thus, all content critically addressed by the Sociology discipline, such as issues linked to slavery, the military dictatorship or Nazism, are subject to surveillance of teachers, as one of the main tenets of the Escola Sem Partido project, which, expressly, allows students to record classes (O Globo, 2019).

Therefore, some questions arise: what is the supposed “Marxist indoctrination”? What is this action by teachers of “leftist” ideas, influenced by “Antonio Gramsci and Paulo Freire”, as defended by accusatory groups, for example, the Escola Sem Partido organization? Is it because they emerge from a critical reflection of social reality?

Why is the opposite not questioned? That is, the inquiry into how many right-wing or far-right teachers we have in schools? For example, those who consider sexist, racist and authoritarian attitudes to be normal. That is, those teachers who naturalize the view of the social world as it is, accept and reinforce the dominant liberal-bourgeois ideology.

Political conviction is not intellectual dishonesty. However, if this were not enough to refute a weak and unfounded accusation (Folha de São Paulo, 2019b), the textbooks reinforce the discourse against these “leftist inclinations” as a liberal author – Max Weber – is the main reference when working with the concepts of politics, power and the State. Of the textbooks analyzed, all (!) have

the German sociologist as the main theorist. Only two of them – *Sociologia* (Araújo; Bridi; Motim, 2016) and *Sociologia para jovens do século XXI* (Oliveira; Costa, 2016) – mention other authors besides Weber to interpret these concepts.

Araújo, Bridi e Motim (2016) also make use of Engels, Poulantzas and Althusser, along with a brief summary table of the perspectives of Marx, Gramsci e Octavio Ianni. Oliveira e Costa (2016) are more incisive and in a clear way, equally, use the socialist view of the State, starting from Marx. Excluding these two examples – the first being more restrained, the second more explicit – all other books use the liberal Weberian theoretical framework. The socialist interpretation is not even mentioned.

Finally, we emphasize that, despite the criticisms of some of the limited approaches presented in the textbooks, regarding the concepts under analysis, above all, we highlight the intellectual effort of these authors in attempting to translate scientific knowledge into school knowledge in a discipline that does not have the same long-standing history and maturation in the classroom as other curriculum subjects.

Therefore, defending textbooks should be a fundamental banner of resistance against who seek to protect and fight for public schools, so that in the future, other perspectives can be incorporated into works that are essential for both teachers in their ongoing professional development and students by providing access to selected cultural goods of high quality. In this context, textbooks become a symbol in the struggle for a better quality, more democratic and enlightening public and popular education.

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