

**THE FUNDAMENTAL PROBLEM OF POLITICS: ANTHROPOLOGICAL VIEWS
AND POLITICAL SENSE**

***O PROBLEMA FUNDAMENTAL DA POLÍTICA: OLHARES ANTROPOLÓGICOS E O
SENSO POLÍTICO***

***EL PROBLEMA FUNDAMENTAL DE LA POLÍTICA: MIRADA ANTROPOLÓGICA Y
SENTIDO POLÍTICO***

Alexandre Aparecido dos SANTOS¹
Renata Medeiros PAOLIELLO²

ABSTRACT: This article aims to present theoretical paths that make it possible to analyze political practice as an agency. In this sense, it offers a discussion that brings together some moments in which anthropological studies were dedicated to questions specific to the political universe and the reflections on political practices and their modes of production present in the work of Pierre Bourdieu. The following understandings result from this approach: i) the modes of production of political practices allow us to understand the existence of a logic proper to a possible political field with defined and legitimately recognized rules and thoughts; ii) the modes of production of political practices reveal the existence of other logics, other rules and other ways of thinking about politics and its functioning that are not recognized and, therefore, are not socially legitimized.

KEYWORDS: Practice. Political sense. Pierre Bourdieu. Political anthropology. Political sociology.

RESUMO: *Esse artigo tem por objetivo apresentar caminhos teóricos que possibilitem analisar a prática política enquanto uma agência. Nesse sentido apresenta, uma discussão teórica que aproxima alguns momentos em que os estudos antropológicos se dedicaram a questões próprias ao universo político e as reflexões sobre as práticas políticas e seus modos de produção presentes na obra de Pierre Bourdieu. Desta aproximação, resultam os seguintes entendimentos: i) os modos de produção das práticas políticas permitem entender a existência de uma lógica própria a um possível campo político com regras e pensamentos definidos e legitimamente reconhecidos; ii) os modos de produção das práticas políticas revelam a existência de outras lógicas, outras regras e outros modos de pensar sobre a política e seu funcionamento que não são reconhecidos e, por isso, não são legitimados socialmente.*

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: *Prática. Senso político. Pierre Bourdieu. Antropologia política. Sociologia política.*

¹ University of São Paulo (USP), São Paulo – SP – Brazil. College of Education. TRAMAS - Research laboratory in education, intergenerational transmission, work and politics - USP. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5901-8262>. E-mail: alexandre.sociais@hotmail.com

² São Paulo State University (UNESP), Araraquara – SP – Brazil. Professor at the Department of Social Sciences. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0640-276X>. E-mail: renata.paoliello@unesp.br/reluz8@uol.com.br

RESUMEN: Este artículo tiene como objetivo presentar caminos teóricos que permitan analizar la práctica política como agencia. En ese sentido, ofrece una discusión que reúne algunos momentos en que los estudios antropológicos se dedicaron a cuestiones propias del universo político y las reflexiones sobre las prácticas políticas y sus modos de producción presentes en la obra de Pierre Bourdieu. De este enfoque resultan las siguientes comprensiones: i) los modos de producción de las prácticas políticas permiten comprender la existencia de una lógica propia de un posible campo político con reglas y pensamientos definidos y legítimamente reconocidos; ii) los modos de producción de las prácticas políticas revelan la existencia de otras lógicas, otras reglas y otras formas de pensar la política y su funcionamiento que no son reconocidas y, por tanto, no están socialmente legitimadas.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Práctica. Sentido político. Pierre Bourdieu. Antropología política. Sociología política.

Introduction: The specificity of an approach

We present here a reflection on some of the moments in which anthropological studies were dedicated to themes and issues specific to the political universe, in order to understand how these issues can be related to the quest to understand political practice as an agency (BOURDIEU, 2011a). The specificity of an anthropological approach to politics can be linked to the project of the discipline itself, since this concerns an attempt to “[...] bring together what modern ideology has separated” (PEIRANO, 1997, p. 22, our translation).

In this sense, the “[...] approach to politics by anthropology can be defined in a simple way: explaining how social actors understand and experience politics, that is, how objects and practices related to the world of politics mean” (KUSCHNIR, 2007, p. 163, our translation). What anthropological knowledge seeks in the face of policy issues is to know what agents conceive and live as politics. Operationalizing this search to know how people experience politics is not a simple task. Rather, it concerns:

[...] a complex proposal to be implemented and which implies at least two assumptions. The first, that society is heterogeneous, formed by social networks that support and enable multiple perceptions of reality. The second, that the “world of politics” is not *a priori* data but needs to be investigated and defined from the formulations and behaviors of social actors and particular contexts (KUSCHNIR, 2007a, p. 163, our translation).

Faced with questions about politics, the objective of anthropological research does not concern the search for an understanding of political institutions and their functioning, but to know how power relations appear, gain forms and meanings for agents situated in the most diverse contexts, building for this a look in which “power (or politics) would be present in all

social relations where there is some kind of asymmetry” (KUSCHNIR, 2007b, p. 7, our translation).

Therefore, thinking about policy issues and debates from an anthropological point of view assumes that:

Anthropology can contribute to this debate because its main task is to study not what politics *should be*, but what *it is* for a given group, in a specific historical and social context. Understanding, “from the native's point of view”, practices that are often different from those we idealize can generate discomfort, intellectual or civic, but a necessary discomfort, because, as Geertz said, “if we wanted home truths, we should have stayed at home” (KUSCHNIR, 2007a, p. 166, authors’ emphasis, our translation).

The idea of a political anthropology, understood as an area of knowledge, can be linked to the English studies of social anthropology, since its consolidation is linked to a moment in the discipline in which the authors moved away from the classic notions of the discipline, which conceived the world social as a whole formed by several interconnected systems - kinship, political, economic, religious systems, among others - a conception by which a system could not be understood without taking into account all the others, in order to seek to understand in isolation the particularities of every social system.

In our reading, among the main thinkers of what today can be understood as a political anthropology is Leach (1995), who questions the disparities between the rules and models of the world constructed by anthropological theory and the practices of the real world. Leach (1995) discusses the importance of understanding the distance that exists between the empirical reality experienced by agents and the logical world derived from the functionalist notion of social systems. In agreement with the reading of Arruti, Montero and Pompa (2012, p. 110, our translation), it can be said that:

In summary, Leach's work provides some fundamental gains for the successive developments of political anthropology. First, he abandons the perspective that considers political systems as the vicarious social institutions of politics which, through conflict resolution, have the function of sociologically keeping the social parts together in a stable totality. Secondly, he advances the proposition that politics is a symbolic-ritual practice whose purpose, through the manipulation of categories, is the permanent change in the way of perceiving distinctions and status relations and, through rituals, the legitimation of this perception.

The notions of independent social systems, of a symbolic-ritual political practice, and of conflict as a structuring category of the social order, are all contributions that can be connected to British social anthropology. It also contributed to the development of the field of

anthropological knowledge as a whole thus highlighting the importance of this area of knowledge throughout the formation of the discipline.

The Anthropologies of Politics and the Political

When looking at the anthropology produced in Brazil, without the intention of linking it to the English tradition, we find, at first, studies of political issues linked to an approach known as anthropology of politics. In these studies, there is a central concern with the way in which people experience politics, which unfolds in a search to understand the idea of politics linked to the mediation relationships built between local communities and the various instances of power, among which state and government policies gain prominence.

In the Brazilian context, in the 1990s, a set of works called *anthropology of politics* was developed, which had their most important institutionalization in the Nucleus of Anthropology of Politics (NuAP), headquartered at the National Museum of UFRJ, but involving groups in other federal universities, such as Brasília, Ceará and Rio Grande do Sul, among others (KUSCHNIR, 2007a, p. 164, our translation).

The approach of the anthropology of politics, among other things, allows thinking about the theoretical developments made possible by the ethnographic notion of “time of politics”, a temporal cut marked “by the moment in which factions (real parties) are identified, and in which, so to speak, that is to say, they exist fully in open conflict, municipalities dividing themselves in a way that is unusual in large cities” (PALMEIRA; HEREDIA, 2006, p. 283, our translation). The analyzes built from the ethnographic category of “time of politics” allowed this approach to divert the focus of its analyzes from large urban centers, objects dear to political science, and turn to local communities.

This change allowed political anthropology studies to perceive, for example, how an electoral dispute can reorganize day-to-day relationships in different and different places. Systematically, about this anthropological approach and its contributions, we must:

In analyzes centered on electoral moments in small towns in the interior of Brazil, Palmeira and Heredia (1993, 1995 and 1997) have developed the concept of political time to designate the periods in which the population perceives politics and politicians as part of their social life. In these societies, which would value union and stability (often represented in the form of the family model), politics is experienced as a seasonal phenomenon because it is identified with division and conflict. In this way, the authors draw attention to politics as it is experienced within a specific cultural and historical universe. Voters are no longer “abstract beings”, so dear to democracy theorists (KUSCHNIR, 2007b, p. 8, our translation).

This set of studies links the idea of a political action to questions that try to go beyond discussions about citizens' unpreparedness to vote, or about the clientelistic tendencies of our party politics, for example, putting on the agenda a vision in which “[...] the understanding of electoral behavior would depend on the adoption of a more “sociological” perspective, in which voters' actions were perceived according to the “social and symbolic” structures that circumscribe them...” (KUSCHNIR, 2007b, p. 8, our translation).

In summary, it can be said that studies in the anthropology of politics have contributed to the structuring of contemporary anthropological discussions that take political relations in Brazil as their object, especially regarding studies that seek to understand electoral practices, by assuming a perspective that denaturalizes the notion of politics.

In our reading, this search evidenced by studies of the anthropology of politics in Brazil, would be the basis of the approach of an anthropology of the political (ARRUTI; MONTERO; POMPA, 2012) that “repositions the question of otherness, conceiving it as a field of practical-discursive relations about differences” (ARRUTI; MONTERO; POMPA, 2012, p. 3, our translation). The theoretical approach of an anthropology of the political aims to discuss political representativeness, thinking above all about this representation from the perspective of alterity, as can be seen:

In this sense, we suggest the need for a theoretical repositioning of the discipline that has as its focus, not the examination of alterity thought of as a set of specificities that make sense in themselves, not even its transformation or the conflict between the different and their differences, but the social dynamics of its production and symbolic appropriation by situated agents (ARRUTI, MONTERO; POMPA, 2012, p. 3, our translation).

The central motto for an anthropology of the political is found in the various assemblages on the issues of difference, taking off even further beyond the analysis of a standardized and institutional political system and placing it in the practical context in which the mediations between this institutional policy and the demand of politically situated agents in everyday life are constructed.

In methodological terms, this approach points to an analysis interested, on the one hand, in native categories thought of as terminologies that express their ways of perceiving rules and social relations; and, on the other hand, the logical and practical principles of symbolic-ritual actions, responsible for the agency of social categories of vision and division of the world, which dispute the control of the way of perceiving distinctions and status relations and their effects of power (ARRUTI; MONTERO; POMPA, 2012, p. 28, our translation).

In summary, the approach of the anthropology of the political presents the possibility of looking at the different forms of political representation established by the practical-discursive relations on the differences and the mediation of these differences in relation to the institutional policies of the State:

The notions currently used by sociology and historiography, based on the notions of “invention” and “manipulation”, despite having fulfilled their analytical function at an early stage of the debate, have become insufficient. Beyond their tautological character (effectively every tradition is invented, and every identity is manipulated according to the contexts of interaction), such notions denounce a rationalist and manipulative conception of agents (and their “agency”). [...] A mediation that is not thought of only as an action that is established between agents and agencies, but as a field of production of meanings that works in the constitution of the agents themselves (ARRUTI; MONTERO; POMPA, 2012, p. 33, our translation).

Finally, based on this theoretical balance, we have that political practice can be thought of as an agency (BOURDIEU, 2011a): i) because it is polysemic, considering the multiplicity of meanings that can be attributed to it; ii) because it is closely linked to issues of otherness, that is, the same practice can have completely different meanings depending on the context in which it is located and carried out; iii) because it is not the result of a manipulative relationship or as a simple conformity with the context of its production.

The relational gaze and the fundamental problem of politics

When reading the work of Pierre Bourdieu, it is quite common for the numerous and possible understandings to be built from the concept of *habitus* – we present below the way in which we understand this concept, without losing sight of the fact that this understanding is one among many possibilities – an Aristotelian notion discussed and applied by several other authors (WACQUANT, 2007; 2017), but which, critically rethought, to question the scholastic modes of knowledge, appears in Bourdieu’s works reformulated and operationalized as one:

[...] systems of durable *dispositions*, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as a generating and structuring principle of practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their end without assuming the conscious intention of the ends and the domain express of the operations necessary to reach them and collectively orchestrated, without being the product of the organizing action of a conductor (BOURDIEU, 1983a, p. 60, our translation).

When announced in this way, the concept of *habitus* gains great applicability in analyzes that are willing to work from the idea of a mediation between the experiences lived by each agent and the social context that encompasses it.

This analytical possibility is sustained because, theoretically, the concept of *habitus*, according to Bourdieu, refers to:

[...] an infinite capacity to engender in all (controlled) freedom products – thoughts, perceptions, expressions, actions – that always have as limits the historically and socially situated conditions of their production, the conditioned and conditional freedom that they guarantee it is as far from a creation of unpredictable novelty as from a simple mechanical reproduction of initial conditions (BOURDIEU, 2007a, p. 91, our translation).

This notion of conditional freedom concerns the capacity that each agent has to produce and reproduce, based on their *habitus* (BOURDIEU, 2007a), innumerable and different practices in the face of the socioeconomic limitations of their social context. It is in this sense that the concept of *habitus* is at the base of what Bourdieu constructs as *praxiological* knowledge (BOURDIEU, 1983a).

According to the author, to know something *praxiologically*, we always have to seek to understand:

[...] not only the system of objective relations that the objectivist mode of knowledge constructs, but also the *dialectical* relations between these structures and the structured *dispositions* in which they are actualized and that tend to reproduce them, that is, the double process of interiorization of exteriority and exteriorization of interiority: this knowledge presupposes a break with the objectivist mode of knowledge, that is, a questioning of the conditions of possibilities and, therefore, of the limits of the objective and objectifying point of view that apprehends the practices from the outside, as a finished fact, instead of building its generating principle by placing itself in the very movement of its realization (BOURDIEU, 1983a, p. 47, our translation).

It is in this “[...] double process of interiorization of exteriority and exteriorization of interiority” (BOURDIEU, 1983a, p. 47, our translation) that the controlled freedom of practices would be found, since through this process every agent would be, through his *habitus*, a consumer and a producer of an objective sense of the world (BOURDIEU, 1983a).

In this sense, as a mediation established through everyday experiences, the concept of *habitus* occupies a central place in Bourdieusian studies, mainly because it can be thought of as a:

Embodied history, made of nature, and therefore forgotten as such, the *habitus* is the operative presence of the entire past of which it is the product: however, it is what gives practices their *relative independence* in relation to the external determinations of the immediate present. [...] Spontaneity without conscience or will, the *habitus* is no less opposed to mechanical necessity than to reflective freedom, to things without history of mechanistic theories than to subjects “without inertia” of rationalist theories (BOURDIEU, 2009, p. 93, our translation).

Considering this object, the political practices of profane agents, the concept of *habitus* becomes strategic because it allows equating the idea of a “universalizing mediation that makes practices without explicit reason and without significant intention of a singular agent, however, 'sensible', 'reasonable' and objectively orchestrated” (BOURDIEU, 1983a, p. 73, our translation).

Thus, when thinking about the discourses of profane agents about politics – because “Like the religious field, the political field rests on a separation between professionals and the profane” (BOURDIEU, 2011b, p. 195, our translation) – as day-to-day political practices, we present the assumption that the construction of a *praxiological* understanding (BOURDIEU, 1983a) about these discourses is only possible:

[...] with the condition of relating the social conditions in which the *habitus* that engendered them was constituted to the social conditions in which it is put into action, that is, with the condition of operating through scientific work the relationship of these two states of the social world that the *habitus* effects, by hiding it, in and through practice (BOURDIEU, 2009, p. 93, our translation).

In this sense, the political discourses of lay agents in the political field would be a practice made possible by the dialectic relationship between two states of the social world, the experiences lived in their personal trajectories and the social context of production of these discourses (BOURDIEU, 1983a). Therefore, we assume to be:

[...] necessary to abandon all theories that take practice explicitly or implicitly as a mechanical reaction, directly determined by antecedent conditions and entirely reducible to the mechanical functioning of pre-established schemes, “models”, “norms” or “roles” (BOURDIEU, 1983a, p. 64, our translation).

By thinking of the production of political discourses by profane agents (BOURDIEU, 2011b) as an agency, that is, a particular moment of production of meanings, we aim to understand these as a practice that, in a *praxiological* perspective, would be “at the same time, necessary and relatively autonomous in relation to the situation considered in its punctual

immediacy, because it is the product of the dialectical relationship between a situation and a *habitus*” (BOURDIEU, 1983a, p. 65, our translation).

Social fields and the fundamental problem of politics

Thinking from the theory of social fields is necessarily thinking about practical-symbolic structures, since the notion of field is presented as the social space where the relations of symbolic disputes are manifested in which the positions of the agents are established *a priori*, as result of the dispute for access and accumulation of cultural capital (BOURDIEU, 2002).

Since:

Cultural capital can exist in three forms: *in the embodied state*, that is, in the form of durable dispositions in the organism; *in the objectified state*, in the form of cultural goods – pictures, books, dictionaries, instruments, machines, which constitute evidence or the realization of theories or criticisms of these theories, problematics etc., and, finally, *in the institutionalized state*, form of objectivation that must be set aside because, as observed in relation to the *school certificate*, it confers entirely original properties on the cultural capital – of which it is supposedly the guarantee – (BOURDIEU, 2007b, p. 74, our translation).

The concept of social field allows society to be understood as a space of dispute for a power that is objectively stratified (BOURDIEU, 2002). Since “For a field to work, there must be objects of disputes and people ready to play the game, endowed with *habitus* that imply knowledge and recognition of the immanent laws of the game, the objects of disputes etc.” (BOURDIEU, 1983b, p.120, our translation).

In this sense, the concept of social field expresses the idea of a space where there would be no neutrality of actions and which, as a space of dispute, is divided between orthodoxy (dominant) and heterodoxy (dominated) in the midst of a game in which the agents of orthodoxy would produce mechanisms and institutions capable of legitimizing symbolic goods, in order to manage social dynamics and hierarchy, maintaining their position of power within it (BOURDIEU, 2002).

Looking at society as an objectively stratified space allows us to think of this society as structured by different social fields, but interconnected by relations of structural homologies, since “Homology can be described as a similarity in difference. Speaking of homologies [...] means affirming the existence of equivalent structuring traits – which does not mean identical – in different sets” (BOURDIEU, 2004, p. 170, our translation).

The idea of similarity through difference concerns disputes for power internal to social fields. These disputes are responsible for the mechanisms through which these fields are structured, reproduced and related (BOURDIEU, 2004). Mainly because:

The structure of the field is a state of the power relationship between the agents or institutions engaged in the struggle or, if we prefer, the distribution of the specific capital that, accumulated in the course of previous struggles, guides subsequent strategies. This structure, which is at the origin of the strategies destined to transform it, is also always at stake: the struggles whose space is the field have as their object the monopoly of legitimate violence (specific authority) that is characteristic of the field in question, that is, in short, the conservation or subversion of the distribution structure of specific capital (BOURDIEU, 1983b, p. 120, our translation).

So, from this perspective, thinking about the political field means reflecting on a context composed of the relationship between agents, by legitimized and recognized rules, by the different symbolic capitals in dispute and by a competition for the condition of legitimate spokesperson of discourses and political opinions of a significant portion of the population contemplated in some way by the dynamics of this field (BOURDIEU, 2002):

The political field is the place where political products, problems, programs, analyses, comments, concepts are generated in competition between the agents involved in it. Events between which ordinary citizens, reduced to the status of “consumers”, must choose, with possibilities of misunderstanding that are greater the further away they are from the place of production (BOURDIEU, 2002, p. 164, our translation).

In our reading, the notion of political field (BOURDIEU, 2002) can be operationalized in studies that seek to think about the dynamics of professional politics and its relationship with other social spaces, insofar as:

[...] it allows for the rigorous construction of that reality that is politics or the political game. [...] it is a notion that has negative virtues, which is a property of good concepts (which are valid both for the false problems they eliminate and for the problems they allow to construct) (BOURDIEU, 2011b, p. 194, our translation).

Therefore, the operationalization of the concept of political field allows us to perceive the relationship between the idea of a false identification and the closure effect – resulting from the dynamics of institutional, electoral and party politics – of what can be thought politically in a society, once that many analyzes of political thinking are built from this relationship and its consequences, especially those analyzes that use the idea of a political opinion that can be manipulated, insofar as:

Political opinion is not a pure judgment, nor is it purely informative, capable of imposing itself through the intrinsic force of its truth, but a force-idea, containing a claim that is all the greater to be realized, by passing to act, the more numerous and powerful the group it mobilizes through its properly symbolic effectiveness (BOURDIEU, 2007a, p. 387, our translation).

It is in this sense that a quest to understand the relationship between the products of the political field – bearing in mind that [...] to say that there is a political field is to remember that the people who are there can say or do things that are determined not by the direct relationship with voters, but by the relationship with other members of the field (BOURDIEU, 2011b, p. 198) – and agents who do not know the logic of the political game legitimized by the field – consumers of the symbolic goods produced by the political field – cannot be reduced to the idea of manipulation.

This statement is linked to the hypothesis that “The fact of producing a response to a questionnaire about politics, such as the fact of voting or, at another level of participation, of reading an opinion newspaper or joining a party, is a particular case of meeting between supply and demand” (BOURDIEU, 2007a, p. 372, our translation).

Thus, when studying this encounter between the sphere of supply, the political field, and the sphere of demand, profane agents in the political field (BOURDIEU, 2011b), it is clear that, in order to understand it:

It is not enough to recognize the inequalities of statutory competence that constrain to remember the social conditions of possibility of the political judgment, the most fundamental political problem is completely concealed, that is, the question of the *modes of producing* answers to a political question when accepting the intellectualist postulate that every answer to a political question is the product of an act of judgment and of a properly political act of judgment (BOURDIEU, 2007a, p. 391, our translation).

The particularities that Bourdieu points out as questions specific to the modes of production of political practices allow us to understand the existence of a logic specific to the political field with defined and legitimately recognized rules and thoughts, but in a relational way it also reveals the existence of other logics, other rules and other ways of thinking about politics and its functioning that are not recognized and, therefore, are not socially legitimized:

If we limited ourselves to lending the idealized people a completely practical knowledge, not exactly of the social world as such, but at least of its position and its interests in this world, it would still remain to be examined whether and how this *political sense* it can be expressed in a discourse that conforms to the truth it contains in the practical state and, thus, become the principle of a *conscious action* and, due to the mobilization power contained in the

explanation, a truly collective one (BOURDIEU, 2007a, p. 371, our translation).

This relationship between legitimate and non-legitimate modes of production points to multiple possibilities for ways of thinking and doing politics – or a multiplicity of political meanings (BOURDIEU, 2007a) – that are silenced by the process of producing knowledge about an opinion recognized and legitimized by professional political agents who structure the political field.

This process of producing a legitimate political opinion tends “to classify, in the same class, certain responses that, despite being identical if considered at their face value, can express quite different dispositions, predictive of actions, in themselves quite different, even opposite” (BOURDIEU, 2007a, p. 395, our translation). This happens because:

The dispositions that are at the origin of the production of opinions are exhibited or exposed, mainly, by the *way* of expressing opinions, that is, precisely, in all the trifles that are lost, more or less inevitably, in the usual recording of responses (almost always simplifying to the maximum to facilitate the speed and standardization of research operations) (BOURDIEU, 2007a, p. 394, our translation).

Within this perspective, questions about political thought based on specific consultations such as, for example, political opinion polls or about electoral or party preferences, create a polysemic relationship – a relationship of mismatch in terms of objective meaning – between the question asked and the question answered, as they present questions formulated based on legitimate rules of a social field to agents who are almost always unaware of the rules of operation of that same field.

This mismatch between the logic of the political field and the political sense (BOURDIEU, 2007a) of agents who are outside this field establishes a gap that is currently linked to the idea of manipulation of profane political discourse (BOURDIEU, 2011b) by the logic of the political field lawful. In our reading, this idea of manipulation is at the margin of an ethnographic knowledge in the face of this relationship, mainly because:

Because they do not know, properly speaking, the question they are answering, deprived of the interests and dispositions that would allow them to truly *reactivate* the formulated question, recognizing in it a particular form of the question of conservation or subversion of the established order, the most deprived do not answer the question that, in fact, is formulated to them, but a question that they produce with their own resources, that is, based on the practical principles of their class *ethos* (BOURDIEU, 2007a, p. 408, our translation).

This condition of maladjustment between the symbolic universe of the agents and the symbolic universe about which they are expected to opine, or take sides, acts as a decisive factor in the process of silencing countless political practices, produced from the profane political sense (BOURDIEU, 2007a) and that, therefore, are not recognized or legitimized by the political field (BOURDIEU, 2002).

This process of silencing the possibilities of thinking about politics outside the logic of the political field erases from discussions the relationship between political choices, derived from the political sense (BOURDIEU, 2007a) and the representation of the world, of the place occupied by agents in the world.

This silencing refers directly to what Bourdieu (2007a, p. 391) called the “most fundamental political problem”, that is, the process by which the diverse experiences and dispositions resulting from the dynamics of everyday life are transformed into a political discourse that is produced, reproduced and experienced outside the logic of the political field.

Final considerations

Assuming an anthropological point of view in the face of political dynamics is to take seriously “[...] the question of the transmutation of experience into discourse, of unformulated *Ethos* into constituted and constituent *Logos*; of the sense of class...” (BOURDIEU, 2007a, p. 429, our translation). It means understanding profane political discourse (BOURDIEU, 2011b) as a practice that expresses an agency, that is, a particular moment of production of a sense of the world. It assumes that:

[...] it would be false to grant political language the power to arbitrarily make what it designates exist: the action of manipulation tends to be circumscribed within certain limits, not only because it is possible for someone to be in a position to resist argumentation without being able to argue the resistance and, even less, to explicitly formulate its principles; but also because popular language has its own resources which, despite not being those of analysis, sometimes find their equivalent in a parable or image (BOURDIEU, 2007a, p. 430, our translation).

Constructing an anthropological look at the “most fundamental political problem” (BOURDIEU, 2007a, p. 371) is thinking about political practice in a scenario of symbolic disputes about political thinking-doing. It is understanding that it is these symbolic disputes that make possible the possibilities of resistance and confrontations in the face of the idea of manipulation coming from the logic of institutional policy professionals or the parties that make up the national political field.

Therefore, thinking about the political sense (BOURDIEU, 2007a) of profane agents (BOURDIEU, 2011b) in relation to the field of politics (BOURDIEU, 2002) is a way to understand the political problem itself, that is, the processes through which agents transform experiences, and thus dispositions, lived in the context in which they are situated into political discourses.

REFERENCES

ARRUTI, J. M.; MONTERO, P.; POMPA, C. Para uma antropologia do político. *In*: LAVELLE, A. G. (Org). **O horizonte da política**: Questões emergentes e agendas de pesquisa. São Paulo: Ed. Unesp / Cebrap, 2012.

BOURDIEU, P. **A Distinção**: Crítica social do julgamento. Porto Alegre: Editora Zouk, 2007a.

BOURDIEU, P. Os três estados do capital cultural. *In*: NOGUEIRA, M. A.; CATANI, A. (org.). **Escritos de Educação**. Rio de Janeiro: Vozes, 2007b.

BOURDIEU, P. A economia das trocas linguísticas. *In*: ORTIZ, R. **Bourdieu sociologia**. (org.). São Paulo: Ática, 1983a.

BOURDIEU, P. **Questões de sociologia**. Rio de Janeiro: Editora Marco Zero Limitada, 1983b.

BOURDIEU, P. **O poder simbólico**. Rio de Janeiro: Bertrand Brasil, 2002.

BOURDIEU, P. **Coisas ditas**. São Paulo: Brasiliense, 2004.

BOURDIEU, P. **O senso prático**. Petrópolis, RJ: Vozes, 2009.

BOURDIEU, P. **Razões Práticas: sobre a teoria da ação**. Campinas, SP: Papyrus, 2011a.

BOURDIEU, P. O campo político. **Revista Brasileira de Ciência Política**, Brasília, n. 5, p. 193-216, jan./jul. 2011b.

KUSCHNIR, K. Antropologia e política. Dossiê: métodos e explicações da política. **Rev. Brasileira Ciências Sociais**, v. 22, n. 64. p. 163-167, 2007a.

KUSCHNIR, K. **Antropologia da política**: Uma perspectiva brasileira. Centre for Brazilian Studies, University of Oxford, Working Paper, 2007b. (Apresentação de Trabalho/Conferência ou palestra).

LEACH, E. **Sistemas Políticos da Alta Birmânia**. São Paulo: EDUSP. 1995.

PALMEIRA, M.; BARREIRA, C. (org.). **Política no Brasil**: Visões de Antropólogos. Rio de Janeiro: Relume Dumará, 2006.

PEIRANO, M. G. S. Antropologia política, ciência política e antropologia da política. *In*: **SÉRIE ANTROPOLOGIA 231**: Três ensaios breves. Brasília, 1997. p. 15-26.

WACQUANT, L. Esclarecer o habitus. **Educação & Linguagem**, São Bernardo do Campo, ano 10, n. 16, p. 63-71, jul./dez. 2007. Available: <https://www.metodista.br/revistas/revistas-ims/index.php/EL/article/view/126/136>. Access: 04 Aug. 2020.

WACQUANT, L. Habitus. *In*: CATANI, A. M. *et al.* (org.). **Vocabulário Bourdieu**. Belo Horizonte: Autêntica, 2017.

How to reference this article

SANTOS, A. A.; PAOLIELLO, R. M. The fundamental problem of politics: Anthropological views and political sense. **Rev. Sem Aspas**, Araraquara, v. 11, n. esp. 1, e022016, 2022. e-ISSN: 2358-4238. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.29373/sas.v11iesp.1.17047>

Submitted: 13/08/2022

Required revisions: 10/09/2022

Approved: 19/11/2022

Published: 26/12/2022

Processing and Editing: Editora Ibero-Americana de Educação.
Correction, formatting, normalization and translation.

