

**CULTURE AND INCLUSION IN PRODUCT DESIGN FOR AUTISTIC WOMEN:
AN ANTHROPOLOGICAL APPROACH**<https://doi.org/10.56238/sevened2025.018-20>**Melissa Marcílio Batista¹ and Annibal Gouvêa Franco².****ABSTRACT**

INTRODUCTION: It is true that the study of politics, that is, from what could be considered as political philosophy to what is called political science more strictly, has been going on for a long time. Countless thinkers contributed to the consolidation of this area of knowledge, from the first Greek philosophers, through Roman, medieval, and modern thinkers, to the present day, when there is already talk of a political science itself.

Keywords: Contemporary Political Theory. Current Political Paradigms. Ideological Diversity.

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INTRODUCTION

It is true that the study of politics, that is, from what could be considered as political philosophy to what is called political science more strictly, comes from a long time. There were countless thinkers who contributed to the consolidation of this area of knowledge, from the first Greek philosophers, through Roman, medieval, modern thinkers, to the present day, when there is already talk of a political science itself.

The importance of politics in the development of societies cannot be denied, its role almost always preponderant among the various instances of society. It would be very difficult to trace a straight path about the development of political science, its embodiment as one of, if not the most, important social science.

It is not the central objective of this essay to explain the history of political thought, but it is a fact that several times it will be necessary to resort to some thinkers, who in one way or another, left enormous legacies for the consolidation of this type of thought. The main proposal is to try to point out, as far as possible, some direction of contemporary political theory, and to pose the question about the real conditions of possibility of the execution of a systematized political thought, which accounts for social reality and contributes to its development, that is, what is the chance of building a true political science.

In times of such diverse paradigms, the big question is to know if there is any sign, even if latent, of talking about a unified political science capable of solving issues imposed by social reality. Throughout the text, some paradigms in force in the contemporary world will be discussed. It will try to explain some essential factors for the understanding of the debated theme, such as globalization, democracy, post-modernity, and others that will arise throughout the construction of the reasoning.

Finally, some criticisms of this model will be pointed out, such as the very structures of domination and reproduction of the current situation. There are several attempts to contest, to seek improvements, which must also be taken into account throughout the essay.

Finally, it is not the aim of this exposition to regard the people, the masses, simply as a *deus ex machina* in the scene of political struggle. It is essential to understand that in the political sphere there is not just one actor, but a multiplicity of them. Political decisions are not a one-way street, they almost always encounter resistance, setbacks, are sometimes contradictory and escape logic more than one imagines.

THE NEW PARADIGMS

As the author Iris Young points out, "*Political theorists in the last quarter-century have been primary custodians of a conception of the political as a participatory and rational activity of citizenship.*" (YOUNG, 1996, p. 479). There is then a diversity of paradigms³ in current political science, or even in current political thought. Sometimes, there is not even a consensus on the nomenclature to be used about what historical stage Western society is in.

Some authors consider that we are currently living in an advanced moment of capitalism, a capitalism that is increasingly complex, different from the one theorized by Marx, when the effervescence of this system clarified very well the contradictions of this system. There is a lot of talk about post-modern society, post-industrial society, but what is noted is a lack of harmony between these various new "social theories".

When talking about post-modern or post-industrial society, one cannot leave aside the understanding of a primordial concept of contemporary politics. It is globalization. It is an important factor today as it emerges as an overwhelming wave of the spread of Western standards around the world, notably in hegemonic countries, such as the United States of America. The term globalization has numerous implications and serves to name various branches of society. Globalization is a process that carries in its core transformations related to the economy, culture, and communication.

Globalization, as understood by most of those who study it, ends up breaking all barriers (or almost all) of countries, cities, and continents, establishing, at least in principle, world patterns of consumption and ideas. This process tends to dismantle, or weaken, in many cases, local standards, in the sense of a certain uniformity and standardization⁴. That is, a standardization of consumption, of Western values based on symbols and products that are increasingly superfluous and simply adequate to the logic of exacerbated consumerism.

Globalization is seen as a process that transcends the local and establishes the global, the global. And another important factor of this new world process is the reduction or shortening of spaces, and also the reduction of time for the execution of tasks.

³ By using the word paradigm, we do not want to define the term here as in Thomas Khun's book **The Structure of Scientific Revolutions**, in which the author traces an entire path of the evolution of the sciences over time. The term is borrowed here in a freer sense, which allows us to analyze the current reality as a moment that encompasses an infinity of theories about society. Various approaches, conceptions and assumptions. This is the reference to the author's work, making the nomenclature "paradigm" at his own risk.

⁴ This does not mean, however, that the leading hands of this process function simply as a one-way street. Nor that, in contact with local realities, international determinations impose themselves independently of reappropriations and resignifications.

After talking a little about globalization, it is now necessary to discuss some points of current paradigms of contemporary political science and what are their influences and implications in social reality.

An example to be exposed, which is on the threshold between philosophy and social theory, is that of the English philosopher John Rawls, who is sometimes commonly confused with a liberal theory. Rawls, in his **Theory of Justice**, points to a social theory based on what he calls "justice as equity." He seeks to elaborate a theory of society, a theory of equality, something broader than simply a theory of government or a theory of power.

Thus, to establish Rawls' place in the contemporary debate, we could make a kind of comparative table between his thought and that of other currents at certain times. Among the aristocrats and liberals of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Rawls would be among the liberals, among the socialists and the defenders of formal democracy of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Rawls would be among the socialists; and currently, between the conservative liberals and the progressives, Rawls would go with the progressives.

He is precisely at the opposite end of the spectrum from conservative liberals such as Hayek and Friedman, and defends a theory that could be called liberal-egalitarian, more identified with the action of the State in various sectors of society to guarantee the population basic rights, based on principles of "justice as equity". In this sense, when talking about Rawlsian theory, we would define his thinking more as the defense of an efficient social democracy, which would minimize the effects of capitalism through the participation of the State that sought to ensure democratic guarantees and precepts of equality.⁵

It is clear that this model arouses numerous criticisms on the part of the defenders of free private enterprise, of the free market, pointing out that this model would not be sustainable. However, Rawls' contribution is considerable and enlists many contemporary thinkers.

Another important paradigm of current political science is feminism. This political-social movement that has gained great importance in the international political scenario in recent years concerns gender issues in politics, more strictly. But this type of theory ends up embracing other important social issues such as prejudice, racism, equal rights and opportunities.

On this subject, we quote an excerpt from Young's text:

⁵ See his most important work: RAWLS, J. **A theory of justice**. Translated by Almiro Pisseta and Lenita M. R. Esteves. São Paulo: Martins Fontes, 1997.

"One of the most original and far-reaching developments of political theory in the past quarter-century is work in feminist political theory. Feminist theorists politicize the social by questioning a dichotomy of public and private and thereby proposing that family relations, sexuality, and the gendered relations of street, school, and workplace are properly political." (YOUNG, 1996, p. 487)

Feminism does not stop there. He has several discussions and theories on important issues in political science. Starting from some assumptions of feminism, sometimes conclusions about politics and even the history of politics can reach conclusions very different from those normally accepted. Feminist theories study, among others, issues of justice, power, obligations, and their reflections, especially on gender issues.

If it is possible to think of a political science that escapes the normal standards imposed by the dominance of men throughout the construction of such a science, it is the proposal of feminism. It is in this sense, the possibility of examining social reality from another perspective, from other starting points, that seeks to understand political relations from gender relations and what the consequences of this are for the construction of consistent knowledge.

So far, we have already spoken of the alternative of Rawls' "theory of justice" and feminist political thought. We then proceed to analyze a little about social movements and their influences in the political field, and then some aspects of what can be said about democratic theory.

With the emergence of globalization and the development of capitalism, and the consequent emergence of the so-called postmodernism, new social movements also emerged, often as a result of this exacerbated development. Still proving the old Marx right, the development of capitalism, as expected, brought with it the aggravation of the social question in the world. The poor classes are getting poorer every day, and wealth is increasingly concentrated in the hands of a few.

With this, it is possible to locate some social movements in favor of the defense of basic rights of survival, such as housing, food, minimum living conditions, work, leisure, etc. But in addition to these movements, new social movements have also emerged that no longer concern primary issues, but more specific issues, such as the movement against racism, against gay rights, animal rights, environmental protection movements, and others.

This multiplicity of diffuse, sometimes divergent, movements and interests has marked the face of contemporary politics, to the extent that it requires from rulers special attention to each one of them, according to the scope of power of each one of them. New

issues have emerged and continue to arise every day, giving a new shape to doing politics today. It is in this flow of power and interests that post-industrial capitalism is immersed.

The political space in this context becomes more and more disputed every day and no longer finds a dominant paradigm, and from this arises the difficult question of thinking about current democracy. When talking about democracy, one thinks first of the North American model, but would this model be viable in poor countries? Perhaps American political science did not imagine the applicability of its model outside the limits of its own country, without taking into account the discrepancy between the various types of democracies in force in the world today.

Another issue that arises is that perhaps the contamination of this science in the United States by imperialist interests occurred in a greater way than one can imagine, and a fragile model of democracy in other countries may be much more interesting for advanced capitalist countries.

The contribution of some authors on the issue of current democracy is extremely relevant at the moment. For example, Schumpeter considers the democratic model a smokescreen over the real game of elite dispute that exists on the political level. For this thinker, the illusion of democracy is nothing more than a simple legitimization of the people to the elites who control the public machine.

Another author who raises questions on this subject is Pareto. He considers that there is a circulation of elites in societies over time, and that balance is always dynamic. The imbalance happens between what he calls the waste of different classes. For Pareto, Political Analysis considers two main residues, the so-called instinct of combinations and the persistence of aggregates. The first is typical of the progressive classes of society, and the second expresses conservatism. If there is an imbalance between the social distribution of these two types of waste, society can be led to go through moments of instability, and even revolutions can be generated.

The important contribution of these authors is related to the fact that they point to representative democracy as nothing more than a game of the elites to remain in power. It is a methodological assumption of the analysis of this essay not to consider the people as a simple supporting actor in the political field, but it is undeniable that the criticism of authors such as Pareto and Schumpeter is relevant to the extent that it unveils the illusion that only a representative democracy, that is, only universal suffrage, is a necessary factor for one to speak of a substantive democracy.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this essay was to superficially present the diversity of paradigms in current political science and to try to demonstrate that there is a diversity of answers to current questions. One has to think of a political science that embodies the ethical-moral values of Western society, or only a methodology at the service of the interests of big capital.

Despite the diversity of currents, thoughts, and attempts at solutions, one can speak of a current crisis of paradigms in political science in general. The question arises at all times, even if implicitly, whether the dichotomous model predominant in the academies, of Marxists in confrontation with liberals, accounts for the complexity of the current social reality. One cannot dismiss the idea that sometimes this dispute gets lost in conceptual and even personal divergences, based on social positioning, and makes room for nothing more than a political philosophy.

Is the political thinker focused on the actual truth of the facts and does his approach contribute to the improvement of the social conditions of the majority of the world's poor people? The ideals of bourgeois democracy may be nothing more than curtains for people's eyes, introjecting values that reproduce oppression and exclusion.

We do not want to preach any conspiracy theory here, but rather to question the current model, which by its own contradictions creates a greater mass of dispossessed people every day. Shouldn't conceptual discussions about individualism and collectivism go beyond the walls of academia and seek concrete solutions to social problems, which are also political?

Alternatives such as Rawls', based on equitable justice, serve to open the eyes to the complexity of social reality and seek more substantive solutions. What is missing is to transformation of it into an effective science, which corroborates the resolution of social problems and the development of human societies.

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