

Book Title: The Politics of Political Science: Re-writing Latin American Experiences

Reviewed by

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Any aspiring or self-interested academic or independent reader must study this classic work of political science. Latin America has experienced the rapid growth of political science in recent years, and as a result, the area has begun to examine its own state. We can observe that the region's top priority was assessing growth indicators from the special issue of the *Revista de Ciencia Poltica* that included several national case studies and its 2015 revision. However, after Latin American political scientists signed the Popayán Manifesto in 2014 and proclaimed the necessity to create categories of critical analysis to study, studies in this area changed direction. Each political scientist must look into things like the dominant theoretical frameworks being taught in the area, its professional networks and how they move about, or the power dynamics that are currently in place within the discipline field.

The *Politics of Political Science* reveals the "lost" or "hidden" paradox of academic inquiry within the discipline of political science in light of this. In these pages, Paulo Ravecca explains that "silences" and "oblivions" are not innocent, and he investigates why political scientists, whose primary responsibility is to reflect on power relations, occasionally struggle to recognize the very power relations that permeate their own field. The key that will direct him in his reflection on political science as a scientific field is this outrageous provocation.

In this sense, the Politics of Political Science is an examination of the stories we tell about the development of our discipline and our personal relationships with scientific knowledge. The invitation to reflect on how we develop ourselves as researchers in contact with our research subjects and the academic society we are members of may be the most intriguing one we discover throughout its pages.

The author's bold suggestion is to view oneself as a creator of knowledge with his own set of views, values, traits, sexual identity, and numerous interconnections that define him and place him in the epistemic community. The primary objective of the book is to dismantle the dominant conceptions of the growth and institutionalization of political science in Latin America, which Ravecca refers to as the "consolidation of a mainstream" (p.6). By using prominent narratives about the establishment of that mainstream—narratives that he perceives as positivist, liberal, sexist, and founded on white supremacy—the author first reveals the relationship between knowledge and power. He then analyzes two actual situations in-depth: Chile and Uruguay.

There are five chapters in the book. "Power, knowledge, and complicated rationality" is the opening chapter, which is a theoretical and methodological proposition that serves as a statement of intent for Ravecca's work.

Two chapters that concentrate on empirical analysis are then presented. The first is titled "When Political Science Was Authoritarian. In "From Revolution to Transition: The Making of a Conformist Academia in Uruguay and Beyond," he debates the situation of the discipline in Uruguay. He discusses the creation of Political Science in Chile throughout the 1980s. These two chapters illustrate two opposing approaches to the development of the discipline: on the one hand, in a context that is authoritarian, conservative, and neo-liberal and seeks to establish a protected democracy, as in Chile; and, on the other hand, the emergence of a democratic political science that abandons the great utopias in favor of an academic liberalism, as in Uruguay.

The remaining chapters (chapters four and five) are devoted to an ethnographic and capillary reflection on the authors' own life story as a PhD student in Canada. His theoretical proposal, which returns to the central issue of the study of power relations and knowledge in the academic area, finishes the book. By performing a study of the literature, Ravecca provides in the first chapter an epistemological reflection on the

connection between knowledge and power. He highlights the significance of writers like Friedrich Nietzsche, his followers, Michael Foucault, and Karl Marx there (p.18). These philosophers believed that knowledge and power were inseparably linked on an immanent level.

In doing so, he travels through the ideas put forward by the aforementioned authors and steers the ship in the direction of the most diverse traditions, including queer studies, Bourdieu's theory, and the decolonial perspective. He offers an epistemological hypothesis to close the chapter.

The author now presents to us his method of auto-ethnographic self-reflection. According to Ravecca, this methodological proposal "explores human groupings I belong to, in many ways; some of the most revealing moments of the so-called fieldwork came in settings that transcend 'participatory observation,' as they were episodes of my own life" (p.31). This study suggests a methodology that blends qualitative methods—such as reading scholarly publications, making participant observations, and conducting semi-structured interviews—with quantitative data processing.

The concept of epistemological "temperatures," which refers to the distance and subjective commitment that the author finds himself in relationships with his topic of research, is the major methodological innovation.

Hence, it appears that the experiential is a component of the process of knowledge building. The chapter on political science under the Chilean dictatorship, which has an epistemological temperature of "cold" due to the author's methods and distance, examines the growth of what Ravecca terms "authoritarian political science" with greater depth and capillarity. The relationship between political science and democracy, which is almost an axiom for the history of the field, serves as the fundamental axis that unites this chapter (p. 49). This part exemplifies the phrase "walking through muck" in its truest sense as it analyzes in-depth two Chilean periodicals, *Revista de Ciencia Poltica* and *Revista Poltica*, to determine the authors' prominent stances on Marxism, democracy, and neoliberal reforms as well as their backgrounds.

As a corollary to this chapter, it is made clear that authoritarian political science both used authoritarian power in the name of democracy and successfully reinforced an academic debate on these concerns (p.86). Ravecca now explores the issue of the institutionalization of disciplines becoming mundane, leaving out the examination of the academic discourses upon which they are based.

Based on readings from articles in the *Revista Uruguaya de Ciencia Política* and 22 interviews, the next chapter explores the (warm) growth of political science in Uruguay. The history of political science in this country is then pieced together using this information, highlighting the trauma of the dictatorship, the fall of the Berlin Wall as the end of the socialist paradise, and the adoption of Carlos Real de Anza as the discipline's founder. The growth of political science in Uruguay coexisted with the political establishment's rejection of Marxist, the notion of objectivity in science, pluralist democracy, and partyocracy.

Ravecca's analysis reveals that the embrace of liberalism and lack of critical theory characterize the Uruguayan academic production in political science (p.139). This leads to the conclusion that during the 1990s and 2000s, it developed a disciplinary identity based on an illusory narrative of the separation of academics and ideology (p.146), a normalization of capitalism, and a liberal democratic discourse. The chapter that analyzes the connections between knowledge creation, power dynamics, and experiences lived from a "I" narrative is the most autobiographical and personal (hot) chapter in the book (p.166). The significance of the researcher's trajectory, the opposition to his sexual orientation, the heteronormativity of the field, and the childhood ridicule are all connected in this part. , Learning, language use, and family ties are only a few of the many components in a person's biography.

The book's concluding chapter strikes a balance between the book's various temperatures by moving from the coldest and furthest away—the Chilean case—to the hottest—the autobiographical chapter. Next he puts together a compendium for the areas given. The author notes that Chilean academia is lacking in authoritarian political science, leaving a void. It is a research and social structure that Ravecca associates with liberalism. He discovers that although not as efficiently as in Chile, the tragedy of the dictatorship is perceived in Uruguay as a bad time for the community.

The rejection of dictatorship is the primary theme in both instances, but the fall of the Soviet Union and the rise of the United States as a hegemonic force have also had an intellectual impact on modern political science (p.224). But because Chile's execution of the liberal market agenda took place in a democratic environment rather than a repressive one that destroyed all opposition, it has fared better than Uruguay's less traumatic transition to a market economy. Last thoughts: Because this work is disruptive in a number of ways, I want to underline that it offers a unique and cutting-edge perspective on the history of political science in Latin America.

On the one hand, it attempts to develop new investigative tools for disciplinary disciplines by fusing quantitative and qualitative methodologies at the methodological level. At the same time, it prompts us to consider the perspective of the expert who creates knowledge. A problem that faces us and sets us on a field of battle that we frequently disregard is to see the researcher as a subject embedded in a context and outside of the objectivist logic, as well as to think of him (and ourselves) as such.

Deconstructing the narratives we create and repeat to explain the history of political science is the other issue. The assumptions we make regarding the positive relationship between political science and democracy are challenged by this book.

We can therefore see that a liberal-democratic setting is not a need for the growth of political science in a nation.

This premise is violated by the radical notion of a "authoritarian political science". The primary tenets upon which the discourse surrounding the construction of political science was founded are intended to be destroyed by this book. On the one hand, it aims to destroy the idea that "democratic political science" is something that is not discussed, and on the other, it "desacralizes" the ivory tower of knowledge by demonstrating how it is bound up with power and ideological relationships. As if that weren't enough, the author's jarring autobiographical research and subjective investigation serve as the steel for the railroad lines that this bold train uses to carry us from the Chilean dictatorship to the Uruguayan democratic transition.

It is a "disruption" of political "common sense" to believe that the field of political science cannot advance without democracy while also believing that it is feasible to

produce political knowledge, set a research goal, and build academic communities in institutionalized settings. On the other hand, Uruguayan political science's idealized view of itself provides a further argument against the country's "conforming" school and the development of that discipline. For many years, our field accepted these two narratives nearly without debate.

Yet, this work challenges the notion that political science was nonexistent under the Chilean dictatorship and that Uruguayan democracy was peacefully blossoming. We must keep our social imagination sharp and direct it toward us and the behaviors that shape how we make and reproduce ourselves, as Ravecca's sharp and critical vision demonstrates.

One is inextricably linked to the curtain that Pierre Bourdieu pulled back from the French academy in his seminal work *Homo Academicus* through innovation, daring, self-reflection, and a keen critical eye on one's own field. Consequently, just as Bourdieu, a postman's son from the Pyrenees, was able to observe power dynamics in the Parisian university, we discover a young gay scholar in Uruguay who studies topics that are not commonly taught there and is encouraged to tell us what no one dares to say: the King is naked.