

## ARTICLE

**THE SCHOOL-STATE RELATIONSHIP: PROVOCATIONS BY NIETZSCHE AND  
FOUCAULT TO THINK THE PRESENT TIME****PAULA CORRÊA HENNING<sup>1;2</sup>**ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3697-9030>**JOSÉ LUÍS FERRARO<sup>3;4</sup>**ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4932-1051><sup>1</sup> Universidade Federal do Rio Grande (FURG). Rio Grande, RS, Brasil.<sup>2</sup> [paula.c.henning@gmail.com](mailto:paula.c.henning@gmail.com)<sup>3</sup> Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Rio Grande do Sul (PUCRS). Porto Alegre, RS, Brasil.<sup>4</sup> [jose.luis@pucrs.br](mailto:jose.luis@pucrs.br)

**ABSTRACT:** The present article aims to think about schools and their relation with the State. It is about to scrutinize this dyad and problematize strategies implemented to defend compulsory education as an unquestionable theme in the educational field. Accompanied by Friedrich Nietzsche and Michel Foucault, the text discusses the criticisms developed by the authors related to the pair school-State. From Nietzsche, the text draws upon his problematizations related to the belittling of school since its union with the State. From Foucault, the text bases its discussion on the State to debate how its articulation with schools became a privileged instrument to reinforce governmentality. The text argues that is only possible to think of schools problematically when we activate on us an acid criticism related to governmentality. We must refuse what we are to open possibilities to others' horizons of subjectivity, woven by the resistance against the instituted and authority truths.

**Keywords:** school, State, governmentality, Friedrich Nietzsche, Michel Foucault.

**A RELAÇÃO ESCOLA-ESTADO: PROVOCAÇÕES DE NIETZSCHE E FOUCAULT PARA PENSARMOS  
NOSSA ATUALIDADE**

**RESUMO:** O presente artigo tem como temática central pensar a instituição escolar e sua relação direta com o Estado. Trata-se de escrutinar sobre tal díade e problematizar as estratégias que são colocadas em operação para que a defesa pela sua obrigatoriedade se torne quase inquestionável no campo educacional. Acompanhado por Friedrich Nietzsche e Michel Foucault, o texto examina as críticas desenvolvidas por esses autores quanto ao par escola-Estado. De Nietzsche, valemo-nos das problematizações a respeito da pequenez que se faz da escola quando da união com o Estado. De Foucault, utilizamos as discussões a respeito do Estado para problematizar o modo como a sua articulação com a escola se tornou um instrumento privilegiado para o fortalecimento de uma governamentalidade. Defendemos que somente é possível pensar problemáticamente a escola quando acionamos em nós a crítica ácida à governamentalidade. Cabe recusar o que somos para abrir passagem a outros horizontes de subjetividade, tramados pela resistência ao instituído e às verdades de autoridade.

**Palavras-chave:** Escola, Estado, governamentalidade, Friedrich Nietzsche, Michel Foucault.

## LA RELACIÓN ESCUELA-ESTADO: PROVOCACIONES DE NIETZSCHE Y FOUCAULT PARA PENSAR NUESTRA ACUALIDAD

**RESÚMEN:** El presente artículo tiene como tema central pensar la escuela y su relación directa con el Estado. Se trata de escudriñar sobre esta diada y problematizar las estrategias que se ponen en funcionamiento para que la defensa de su obligatoriedad se vuelva casi incuestionable en el campo educativo. Acompañado por Friedrich Nietzsche y Michel Foucault, el texto examina las críticas desarrolladas por los autores con respecto a la pareja escuela-estado. Desde Nietzsche, el texto hace uso de las problematizaciones relacionadas a la pequeñez que se hace de la escuela cuando esta se une al Estado. Desde Foucault, las discusiones sobre el Estado se utilizan para problematizar la forma en que su articulación con la escuela se ha convertido en un instrumento privilegiado para fortalecer la gubernamentalidad. El texto argumenta que solo es posible pensar, problemáticamente sobre la escuela, cuando desencadenamos una crítica ácida de la gubernamentalidad en nosotros. Es necesario rechazar lo que somos para dar paso a otros horizontes de subjetividad, tejidos por la resistencia a lo instituido y a las verdades de autoridad.

**Palabras clave:** escuela, Estado, gubernamentalidad, Friedrich Nietzsche, Michel Foucault.

### INTRODUCTION

Discussions about the school and its functioning are not new issues. They populate the educational field, becoming recurrent. Different thinkers have debated about the guarantee and *necessity* of education, the end of these institutions, or even home education. The fact is that the discussion about the school is on the agenda of our ethical and political issues in the Education scenario. What do we expect from the school? What do we want from it? Why do we fight for it? For us educators, these questions are of the utmost importance and deserve our philosophical consideration.

This text is based on the perspective of the philosophy of difference, especially in the studies of Friedrich Nietzsche and Michel Foucault, to look at the school institution from a critique of our present time. It is not about defending a position for or against the school, but scrutinizing its functioning, as well as the strategies put into operation so that the defense for its obligatoriness becomes almost unquestionable in the educational field.

We start from a dyad already consolidated in our society: the school-State relationship. With this text, we intend to problematize how its articulation has become a very privileged instrument for the strengthening of governmentality. For this, we use the philosophers already mentioned.

The article focuses on two central elements, one on Nietzsche, and the other on Foucault. using Nietzsche's lectures at the University of Basel, in 1872, we announced and provoked the school-state alliance that was being established in Germany at that time. Next, we approach the criticism of the German philosopher to the way Foucault understands the State and its correlations with the concept of governmentality. In this sense, we intend to bring up a provocation to the school in this alliance already consolidated with the State from governmentality as a grid of intelligibility in our current time.

To do this, in our view, is to empower ourselves to exercise the critique that Foucault (1978) taught us. It is to do it in an acidic way and with the “feet on the ground”. It is not about the way that is already widespread among us of looking at the school “as a place of critical and emancipated training”. Raising banners in favor of homogenization and repetition, now renewed, of school institutionalization, will not lead us to other paths. It is not this criticism that we are dealing with in this text. The criticism here assumes, in the company of Foucault, “the art of not being governed in this way and at this price” (1978, p. 4).

Perhaps in this way, armed with the exercise of diagnosis on such relationships and the power of thought to see the governmental strategies that are triggered by the need for education, it is possible to create fissures in the so-twisted networks of articulation between this pair solidified for at least three centuries: the school and the State.

## NIETZSCHE AND THE CRITICISM OF EDUCATIONAL ESTABLISHMENTS

The young Nietzsche, in 1872, gave five lectures at the University of Basel, *On the future of our educational establishments*. With his acidic critique of modernity, the philosopher discussed the intrinsic relationship between education and the State. The State had the task of proliferating culture – the one that Nietzsche fiercely criticized: a culture of the masses, a universal culture, of utility. A culture then marked by the transposition of a utilitarian education constituted by economic logic. The cultural elevation of the individual was forgotten in favor of an instrumentalized culture that invested in the discourse of an essentially technical formation, aiming to meet the demands of the market. A mass culture, universalizing, that bet on compulsory education and destined for the formation of the herd. “The most universal culture is exactly barbarism” (NIETZSCHE, 2003a, p. 62). In this sense, still according to the German philosopher, a cultivated barbarism.

The harsh criticisms made by Nietzsche in these lectures are tributary to his diagnosis of modernity. A critique of the customs and values assumed at that time. A time when he relegated philosophy to a lower level and handed over pedagogical activities to the hands of the State. The instrumentalization of educational establishments was one of the strategies for strengthening the State in the training of *its* men.

With the Franco-Prussian War of 1871, there were numerous changes in teaching in Germany, the context of which Nietzsche spoke. Economic changes have effected transformations in the teaching and cultural scenario. From that moment on, in the German gymnasiums, it was a question of training for the sciences, or even for a certain “misery of living” (FRAGOSO, 1974, p. 278). That was a “national culture” manufactured by the State and consolidated in the formation of the masses in the educational establishments. Nietzsche made numerous criticisms of these changes in the educational scenario and the Prussian model of school, which was admired and imitated in many States.

Of course, these other states assume that this benefits stability and state formation, more or less like this famous mandatory military service that has become completely popular. When you see that everyone periodically and proudly wears the military uniform, when you see that almost everyone, thanks to the gymnasiums, has assimilated a uniformed State culture, here hyperbolic individuals could almost speak of a regulation worthy of antiquity, of this power of the State that was only carried out once in antiquity, and that almost all young people are instinctively asked to consider as the flowering and the supreme objective of human existence (NIETZSCHE, 2003a, p. 98).

With this very energetic look at state forces, the philosopher dedicated to demarcating the plastering and smallness that were established in school spaces of the time and that persisted as a legacy in the organization of contemporary educational establishments. The State took to itself the school as *the* space for the dissemination of culture. However, it was not about any culture, but the one that, by the meshes of the State, had been defined as the ideal to be taught, having permission to enter the educational establishments.

For Nietzsche, there is a very clear difference between educational establishments and educational institutions. The first ones are dedicated to the formation of a herd education, for the masses, for the formation of State officials. The second is inclined towards cultural elevation, training for the few, which addresses the needs of philosophy, the inclination towards art, and knowledge of the Greek spirit. The Nietzschean distinction remains valid when it comes to observing the nuances that produce the difference between teaching and education. While the first is strongly associated with instruction and, therefore, with technique – in *knowing and doing* –, the second concerns training in a broad sense: the dimension of *being*.

The fierce criticisms produced by Nietzsche at the conferences at the University of Basel were aimed at the educational establishments of that time, in a very defined place: Germany. His objective with these writings was to highlight the poverty of the culture in those institutions. It was about denouncing the fragility and smallness of spirit characteristic of those spaces. The individual is instructed for a particular profession. It is defined, by state determinations, what is culture and what will be taught

for the formation of the herd. This cannot be called education, because in such spaces there are no “establishments for culture” (NIETZSCHE, 2003a).

Culture, in the Nietzschean sense, could not be passed on from a list of contents to be taught through memorization. “[...] culture cannot reproduce and grow when education is oriented towards a profession, a career, a function, a position, when it is moved by the 'utilitarian spirit' when it is verified through mandatory and integrative exams when it is extensive and universal” (SOBRINHO, 2003, p. 11, author's emphasis). For Nietzsche, culture is assumed to be the one that is produced through creation and experimentation. Only in this way will it be possible to potentiate individual forces, as opposed to the formation of equal men or even the formation of a herd. Singular, unique beings, true warriors, in the Nietzschean sense.

When analyzing the philosopher's writings, it is evident how much he distances himself from the defense of a compulsory education, defined and demanded by the State. With this education, the existence of herd men is only possible, men who think and act based on the definitions established by the State. Its strengthening takes place, *pari passu*, with the obligatoriness of this teaching, since its requirements are established together with the poverty of the pedagogical spirit of the time.

[...] By a direct path, for example, by a compulsory elementary education for all, with this, we do not approach what is called the formation of the people, but in a superficial and crude way: the authentic and deeper regions, in which the great mass can have contact with culture, that is to say, that place where the people preserve their religious instincts, where they continue to operate with the poetic system of their mystical images, where they remain faithful to their customs, to their law, to the soil of their country, to their language, all these regions can hardly be reached by a direct route, and in any case only by obligatory and destructive measures: but really promoting, in these serious matters, the formation of a people is nothing but to oppose these obligatory and destructive measures, and to preserve this salutary unconsciousness, this pallor of the people that gives it health and without whose effect, without whose remedy, no culture can maintain, in view of the devouring tension and excitement. of its effects (NIETZSCHE, 2003a, p. 90).

We can highlight two reasons why Nietzsche faithfully criticized the defense of mass education. One of them refers to what we have been discussing here: with the definition of an education marked by the State, we could never reach the possibility of creation and experimentation, since the teaching would be destined to strengthen and reach the State objectives, and the culture would be doomed to universalization. The other reason refers to aristocratic education, aimed only at a few possible men, only those who would not be educated to govern. It would be a kind of greenhouse culture for exceptional plants (NIETZSCHE, 2003a). It would be an elitist education, defined only for a few and that would make possible the appearance of the superior man. However, Nietzsche observes such a possibility only when education is not determined by the State and by a specific type of culture. The warrior would need space for the creation of cultural elevation. It would not be in the institutions defined by state requirements that the warrior could emerge.

With these considerations about Nietzsche's criticisms of education, we do not want to defend the creation of aristocratic education. Each in his own time. Ours is of a different order and, without a doubt, we won in terms of rights and achievements with the democratization of education. However, it is about updating Nietzsche's thought and taking it to the limit as he taught us. We will do this by exercising criticism about the nationalization of the school. If so far we have discussed Nietzsche's lectures on the subject, we intend, in continuity, to join Foucault, still echoing in us the studies of the German philosopher. Studies on governmentality (FOUCAULT, 2008a, 2008b) will help us to tense our thinking and to problematize how the State is currently involved in different strategies that strengthen the need for its defense and permanence.

With this, it is not a question of ending schools, but of stretching the thought to make them strange and to empower the defense of school spaces, not for the formation of mass culture, but perhaps, walking with Nietzsche and Foucault to find the traces of the nationalization of the school and its fragility precisely because of that. This is how we will assume the position of estrangement from this little-questioned truth among us in the educational field: the direct relationship between the guarantee of rights

with compulsory education and the duty of the State. “Among the servants of what is 'evident' and the lonely, we are the fighters, that is, those who are full of hope” (NIETZSCHE, 2003a, p. 44).

It is about strengthening our commitment to school education. However, not the education that Nietzsche once criticized, but the education of laughter, joy, the potential for encounter, and the desire for the creation and experimentation of other possibilities. Once again, his teaching is produced in us: it is necessary to fight with winning causes (NIETZSCHE, 2003b). The nationalization of the school is one of them.

## GOVERNMENT AND STATE IN FOUCAULT

As we have seen, Nietzsche, in *On the future of our educational establishments*, stresses the relationship between schooled education and the State. In this section, we intend to bring together Nietzsche's critique of the school-State pair and Foucault's studies on governmentality to think about this dyad contemporaneously.

As we know, the power-knowledge relations for the French philosopher are not located in the State. They are multiple, microphysical and capillary (FOUCAULT, 1990). Like Nietzsche, Foucault also did not see the synonymy between State and power, or at least he did not place the State as the place of reference for power.

From the Nietzschean analysis grid, we will look at the criticisms established by Foucault about the concept of government and we will problematize the school-State relationship. It is about understanding the school as an investment of the State so that governmentality can operate, that is, the school is not only intended to be a tool of the State but complements it, extrapolating it. In this regard, it is important to understand that it is not about ending the State, but perhaps making two very necessary movements to activate in us the political criticism to which Foucault invites us: a) to problematize how the State interferes in our lives; and, b) to potentiate in ourselves other ways of doing the school. For this, it seems prudent to free ourselves from the individualization of the State to “[...] promote new forms of subjectivity through the refusal of this type of individuality that has been imposed on us for several centuries” (FOUCAULT, 1995, p. 239).

Therefore, in this article, bringing together Nietzsche's criticisms of the school-State relationship and Foucault's studies, we would like to “[...] return to the problem of the State. Or the question of the State, or the phobia of the State, based on the analysis [of] governmentality” (FOUCAULT, 2008b, p. 104). It is important to be clear that Foucault's concern was not to make a theory of the State. When the philosopher is concerned with it, it is to understand it not as a place of power or as a “political universal” (FOUCAULT, 2008b). What is present in his analysis is the importance of institutions and their nationalization in the fabrication of the modern subject. With Foucauldian studies, we understand that the problem of nationalization composes the questions raised by him.

[...] The State is not universal, the State does not have an autonomous source of power. The State is nothing more than the effect, the profile, the mobile frame of a perpetual nationalization, of incessant transactions that modify, that displace, that subvert, that insidiously slide, it matters little, the sources of financing, investment modalities, decision centers, forms and types of control, relationships between local authorities, etc. In short, the State has no guts, as we know, not only because it has no feelings, either good or bad, but it has no guts in the sense that it has no insides. The State is nothing more than the mobile effect of a regime of multiple governmentalities (FOUCAULT, 2008b, p. 106).

Thus, from this political perspective, looking at the State makes sense to understand how it has historically managed to survive. According to the author, governmentality may be one of the conditions for the State to still exist in the way it is today. “[...] the State in its survival and the State in its limits should only be understood from the point of view of general governmentality tactics” (FOUCAULT, 2008a, p. 145). In this sense, understanding government practices – and with it, the school-State relationship – becomes fundamental to targeting the governmentality that is produced to lead individuals. What procedures are put in place? What calculations, techniques, and tactics are operationalized for the exercise of power over the population? Such action strategies are operationalized

to guide the subject and, more broadly, the population. The objective is to govern the subject, bend him over his will, and, perhaps, more: produce other wills, leading his actions.

Governmentality as a study of government practices, of how it acts on living individuals, deserves to be seen from its set of institutions - the school, for example, for its tactics and strategies produced to govern people and collectivities. Therefore, the ways of governing are linked to the population, to this group of individuals, improving their living conditions and increasing their wealth. The government takes place at the service of this population, of its governing. “[...] the population will be the object that the government should take into account in its observations, in its knowledge, to effectively govern rationally and thoughtfully” (FOUCAULT, 2008a, p. 140).

Different governments are operating to lead the population. Thus, it is an important shift concerning the State as a higher instance. In it, there is the proliferation of forms of government through different instances, whether the family, the pedagogue, or the teacher. Therefore, it is necessary to invest in strategies to capture the subjects so that the government can achieve its purpose, its objective, and so that the population can be in line with this same purpose. It is possible to say that the government disposes of things with the objective of a certain end.

Unlike sovereignty, which acted to enforce the law, the government uses tactics and strategies to arrange things; at the limit, it uses laws as tactics, that is, tactics decisively contribute to putting governmentality into operation. “[...] the purpose of government is in the things it directs; it must be sought in perfection, in maximizing or intensifying the processes it directs, and the instruments of government, instead of being laws, will be different tactics” (FOUCAULT, 2008a, p. 132).

Thinking about the school-State union, we are faced with different laws that require the presence of the individual in the school space. A guarantee of rights to the citizen and a set of duties to the State. The most recent mandatory school law refers to the requirement that children from the age of 4 are enrolled in Early Childhood Education (BRASIL, 2013). However, it is not only these laws that produce our governmentality, but the proliferation of different instruments, of a set of subtle, microphysical, persuasive tactics and strategies, to convince the population of the importance of the school.

Assembling different population groups in defense of mandatory education, we have the family, for example, as a device for capturing subjects in school networks. As indispensable support from the government, the family will decisively help to control the population of schoolchildren. With it, the reactivations about the importance of school are constantly triggered. Therefore, the family is “[...] a privileged instrument for the government of populations” (FOUCAULT, 2008a, p. 139).

The family, as an important instrument for the government of the population, becomes one of the possible means for the government to achieve success. Activating families, and convincing them about certain goals, is a strategy that can guarantee success in reaching a certain goal. Arrange things and place them in strategic places so that government actions are successful. In this sense, the family now becomes an instrument that will be used to “improve the fortunes of populations” (FOUCAULT, 2008a, p. 140).

Another tactic that triggers the success of the school-State pair is specialized knowledge such as pedagogy, psychology, and social assistance. Their knowledge convinces us of the need for education at the right age, the good psychological development of the individual in the interaction with their peers, or even the urgency of the school as a social practice of emancipation of the individuals. Again, it is not about the mandatory school law, but about a set of elements that, transposed to be understood by parents, for example, through the media or an informal conversation with these professionals, convince the first of the school's *needs*.

Such arguments, in addition to being commonly announced inside school walls, transpose them. A quick search on the Internet is enough to see countless advertisements, banners, and publicity campaigns showing the *need* of the school for the formation of the individual. As well as the political knowledge that is produced in the different fields of the humanities, there is a very broad spectrum network to convince families of the need to enroll in schools. Isn't listening to such speeches, by the seal of experts in their areas, a way of activating the urgency of enrolling our children? Much more than the obligation triggered by the law, it is about population management tactics, strategies that invest in a set

of elements to guide our gaze, not to the obligation to follow the law but to understand the school as a right and a possible guarantee of life improvement.

In this way, Foucault helps us to understand the approximations between the mechanisms of coercion and the contents of knowledge. Power-knowledge relations are produced and become robust in the performance of a certain political or even governmental end.

[...] Various mechanisms of coercion, perhaps even legislative sets, regulations, material provisions, phenomena of authority, etc.; knowledge contents that will be taken equally in their diversity and heterogeneity, and that will be retained according to the effects of power that they carry while valid, as part of a knowledge system. What is sought then is not to know what is true or false, substantiated or unsubstantiated, real or illusory, scientific or ideological, legitimate or abusive. It seeks to know what are the links, what are the connections that can be observed between mechanisms of coercion and elements of knowledge, what games of emission and support are developed in each other, and what makes this element of knowledge can take effects power affected in such a system to a true or probable or uncertain or false element, and what makes such a procedure of coercion acquire the form and justifications proper to a rational, calculated, technically effective element, etc. (FOUCAULT, 1978, p. 13).

In the plots of power-knowledge relationships, governmental machinery is invested, triggering the *need* for school in the population. Whether by the mechanisms of coercion, embodied in legislation and the strengthening of the State, or the contents of knowledge, woven by the knowledge of experts, we have here the almost unshakable robustness of the school-State pair. The governmental end that is established seems to acquire its success. What makes it powerful is the mass population's understanding that their attitudes are of supposed freedom of action: “I want and enroll my children in school”.

Looking at this institution as a very important element for population governance makes us understand why we are captured by the *need* for the school. Observing government strategies and tactics, we understand that our actions are not private or the result of our *enlightened conscience*; they are, rather, the supposedly free results of our subjection to the power relations that are produced in the plots of governmentality. Our choices, including those in which we feel as individuals who act and define the course of their lives, are made up of the government tactics that constitute us as subjects of rights. In this regard, Silvio Gallo, when dealing with our “democratic governmentality” in Brazil, tells us:

We are subject to citizens; we are, compulsorily, subjectivized to obey the basic principles of a democratic society. We must participate; we must confess our political truth in the vote; we must confess our technical truth at work; we must confess the truth of what we are in the most diverse social processes because we are citizens with rights. We have the right to education, the right to health, the right to work, etc., we have the right to be, that's why we are. The biopolitics of democratic governmentality produces the “subject of rights” (GALLO, 2017, p. 89) [emphasis added].

For the modern critical tradition, the school takes the subject students as individuals who deserve this guarantee of rights. In biopolitical times and a country like Brazil, public education is a right for all Brazilians, and our resistance to the political shocks and attacks we are facing must remain. However, from the Foucauldian lens, the school is also an institution of kidnapping and an important device so that, capturing its population masses, and governing behaviors at the disposal of things, it can reach a certain end. We are entangled in the networks of governmentality that needs the school to exist. Considering all the criticisms directed at the school institution, it seems that we are very far from abandoning the modern project of education. It seems necessary, for our political criticism, to see the school less as an achievement – even if it is also that! – and more like important machinery of our modern society, which is driven by our governmentality. What we call the subject of rights is nothing more than an effect of power-knowledge relations (FOUCAULT, 2006).

In the name of the population's security, with the consolidation of biopolitical strategies, we have the defense of human rights through legal provisions. Compulsory education was one of these mechanisms. Therefore, the conduction of conduct and the fabrication of a certain type of individual can be considered marks of schooled education. This was already one of the acid criticisms made by

Nietzsche in his 1872 lectures. That classic question of a Political Pedagogical Project has its grip here: “which subject do we want to form?” This seems to be one of the most prominent questions within the school, but it is not produced tied to its walls, but articulated with the demands of a type of State. The school, as a governmental institution – whether of public or private competence, as both respond to the determinations of the State –, defines, under its guidelines, which subject is this that must be transformed when entering the institution. As a citizen's right and a State's duty, it produces truths and meanings for the production of schoolchildren, articulated to the type of society one wants and in which one lives.

To look at school education as a right for all is to remove from this modern event the political problematization that deserves our attention. Placing the school as a citizen's right and duty of the State positions it and evidences it as a state machine, managing control over its contents, and training objectives for the subject of rights. Could we see there the conduct of the subjects who live there? Questioning the school-State relationship, the school as universality or even as a “public good”, is to question the governmentality that is produced inside and outside it. It takes our boldness for that. It is necessary to create elements that empower us to problematize these truths that circulate in society as indubitable.

### **POSSIBLE PROVOCATIONS TO THE SCHOOL: TYING THE DISCUSSIONS**

If Nietzsche and Foucauldian criticism accompanied us in this text, it was because the school-State dyad was, at least, strange to us. Perhaps from this strangeness, other students, other teachers, and other schools can emerge. That's our bet!

Foucault (1995) taught us that the dangers of power are everywhere. But he was also the one who helped us to understand that, precisely because we are entangled in political networks of power, resistance is possible. The production of new subjectivities involves the political exercise of understanding the governmental plots that manufacture us so that we can resist them. Freeing ourselves from the State to refuse what we are can be a bet on activating Foucauldian criticism.

“How not to be governed like that?” (FOUCAULT, 1978, p. 3). With this critical exercise, Foucault provokes us to think about multiple possibilities in everyday life. With this provocation, we would like to launch into thinking about the powers that we know exist within the school.

Our resistance to “not being governed like that” involves the exercise of activating our doubt, questioning the truths professed by the authority, in this case, the authority of the school-State pair. It is not a matter of refusing them in advance; it is, rather, to place them in the line of problematization, of the encounter with the inquiries of what has been given to us as calm and certain for some centuries. Before considering other possibilities for the school, it is necessary to be surprised by the well-planned meeting between it and the State. Then, in our view, the creation and experimentation of possibilities in the school space can be produced by us.

[...] criticism is the movement by which the subject gives himself the right to question the truth about its effects of power and the power over its discourses of truth; well then, criticism will be the art of voluntary inservitude, that of reflected indocility. The critique would essentially have the function of de-subjecting the game of what could be called, in a word, the politics of truth (FOUCAULT, 1978, p. 5).

With the critical activation exercised in us, we open the way to the power of thought: what school is this for which we still fight? A school that is the pair of the State. A school that is, indeed, defined by governmental plots. This is the school we have. We will not be separated from it. But how is it possible to resist then?

Maybe “with our feet on the ground” and understanding the nationalization of the school, it is possible to produce fissures. We say again: they are only possible because we trigger in ourselves the acid criticism of governmentality. It is up, then, to refuse what we are to open the way to other horizons of subjectivity, woven by the resistance to the instituted, to the truths of authority.

Thus, our bet is on the production of other encounters, produced within this school that we have: nationalized, at the service of governmentality, defining the content and a specific type of subject that one wants to form. Yes! This is the school we are talking about. It is not about building a new school.

It is about rethinking it, triggering the bitterness of criticism, and fighting against forms of subjection within the institution.

Encounters, collectivities, and sociability in school spaces can be triggered by the exercise of thinking about life, beyond the imprisonment to a knowledge of skills and abilities, exclusively. We bet, together with Gallo, in another school “[...] that is a place to learn to live, a place to exercise to worry about oneself, to experience the care of oneself, to know oneself to be and to live well, to produce oneself as a singular subject” (2015, p. 445). Thus, the power lies in shifting the gaze from the content or morality that plagues the school to a gaze on and about life. May it put us to think about our choices, our resignations, and our ways of existing and living in current times.

From this instigation, we are triggered, fabricated, and fractured as teachers. It is the desire and potency of life that we understand this school to be about. Stated but also full of gaps and possible resistance. Perhaps we have to exercise the criticism that Foucault (1978) tells us about to open passages to these possible others within this institution. That is why it is not a question of ending school or nationalization, or even the obligatoriness attributed to it. Our struggle must remain for us to think about the possible breaths in this same school. In the political exercise of Nietzsche's and Foucauldian criticism, we find breaths that lead us to the creation and experimentation of other encounters and other ways of doing, other pedagogies. What are these encounters? It is not up to us to say, just activate in us and provoke our peers to activate the political criticism that fills us with power to think about the school we have.

No one can build in your place the bridge that you would have to cross in the flow of life – no one except you. Of course, there are paths and bridges and innumerable demigods who will offer you to take you across the river, but only insofar as you sell yourself entirely: you would put yourself as a pawn and you would be lost. There is only one path in the world that none but you could tread. Where does he take it? Don't ask anything, you must follow this path. Who was it who announced this principle: “A man never rises higher than when he does not know where his path might lead”? (NIETZSCHE, 2003c, p. 140).

Finally, it is necessary to highlight that the problematization offered by this text - which takes as reference the writings of Nietzsche and Foucault - serves so that we can continue to (re)think of school institutions as a modern heritage even in contemporary times. Therefore, it is a matter of showing how these spaces remain instrumentalized in favor of a specific way of thinking about the State, of a specific state rationalization. Despite the tension in the educational discourse towards the promotion of a kind of split between school and society, it is exactly this analysis of the State-school pair that demonstrates how much this agency is necessary and, also, inseparable.

The desire here was to perform a critical visibility operation. Criticism is not of compulsory education or school – as we have stated throughout the work –, but of how our attentive eyes allow us to perceive how this becomes a strategy to insert subjects inside a school that makes them elaborate a series of relationships with themselves and with others, mediated by the conformation of a reason of State that aims at its subsistence.

The Nietzschean critique, in this sense, takes effect by the fact that, when referring to the school space, there is a depotentiation of the subject who can no longer take the reins of his education in the name of an ideal of a subject that practically becomes a state asset, starting to be produced on demand. This perception broadens with Foucault when, from his analysis of governmentality, he allows us to perceive how much schools become necessary institutions for the State by insinuating into the curricular organization and the modes of circulation of things, people, speeches, and truths.

Finally, what we put in evidence is the idea of necessity: the school as a necessary good. When justified by a series of professionals who compose it and act daily in its different spaces, we cannot exempt or remain refractory to the problematization of an education guided by the State. This would be to assume the naive condition that would lead us to empty not only education as a signifier, but the very powers of the educational field, which would become detached from actions, practices, and analyzes of political order, assuming an inert condition. After all, what, besides politics, would be able to set this field in motion?

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Author 1 – Project coordinator, elaboration of data analysis and writing of the text, as well as its final review.

Author 2 – Researcher of the project, elaboration of the data analysis and writing of the text, as well as its final review.

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