

Lineages of Brazilian political thought*

Gildo Marçal Brandão

ABSTRACT

The objectives are to investigate the characteristics of conservatism and liberalism in Brazil, verify whether the concepts of “organic idealism” and “constitutional idealism” are capable of describing and evaluating the principal “forms of thought” which have dominated Brazilian political and social thinking since the last quarter of the nineteenth century, and formulate a hypothesis on the way these currents of thought respond to the challenges raised by the country’s political development. The analysis will focus less on the substantive content of ideologies and worldviews than on describing the underlying “forms of thought”: intellectual structures and theoretical categories based on which reality is perceived, practical experience is elaborated, and political action is organized.

Key words: political thought; organic idealism; constitutional idealism; conservatism; liberalism

In the last years, a heterogeneous cluster of researchers, provided with the analytical tools accumulated throughout decades of institutionalized social science, has been not only revisiting the essayism of the 1930’s, but also scrutinizing the country’s intellectual history and producing a considerable amount of analyses, empirical and historiographic researches, and theoretical interpretations that have been contributing to strengthen our knowledge on the fundamental patterns and dilemmas of Brazilian society and politics. Outlined in the middle of the twentieth century, this field of studies has had a remarkable boost in the 1970’s, achieving in the 1990’s its maturity as one of the most productive areas in the social sciences. Effectively, besides the emergence or renovation of the disciplines investigating the phenomena related to life in a period of transition – as urban violence, religious pluralization, rapid increase in associative organization, redefinition of gender and racial relations, transformations in the world of labor, judicialization of politics, the role of the media in the formation of political will among the population, the financialization of the economy, the new equilibria in international relations, etc. –, one of the most prominent characteristics of the social sciences we are making is the growth and diversification of this area of research which, with more or less propriety, is being called “social thought” in Brazil or “Brazilian political thought”.

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Retrospectively seen, its contours have never been very clear: being a border area, allowing for intellectual orientations proceeding from different human sciences, the study of the “politico-social thought” has been established here, as anywhere in the world, in the crossing of so diverse disciplines as political anthropology and sociology of art; history of literature and history of science; history of mentalities and sociology of the intellectuals; political and social philosophy and theory; and history of the ideas and world visions. This superposition – sometimes conflictive to the very extent of its undifferentiation – would perhaps have been inevitable in a country of late capitalism like ours, once the treatment of literature, arts, culture and science, as practiced here, ends up having an important political dimension due to the pressing relationship between the formation of the culture and that of the nation.

As it happens everywhere, much stuff of lesser importance has been written in this respect, from histories of ideas which were no more than monographic accounts of the authors’ conceptions, without the lesser concern for the nature of the theoretical undertaking and the historic-social processes – of which the thought involved and the form of approach are momentum and expression –, to the pretentiousness of erecting the sociology of intellectual life or of academic institutions as a succedaneum for the sociology of knowledge. Attempts in the same sense have been done with the purpose of solving the problem of a theory’s quality, and of its cognitive and propositive capacity, through an indefinite remission to the degree of institutionality of the discipline or academic province from which it emerges. That, not to mention the traditional “explanations” of a work by the author’s social origin, and the hypermodern reductions of form and content of the intellectual production to the institutional strategies or to those of *coteries*’ in search professional or social promotion.

Anyway, in spite of all this, that diversity favored the accumulation of theoretic capital and didn’t prevent the crystallization of a differentiated intellectual field, proceeding from the acknowledgement of a (rich) tradition of social and political thought in Brazil. This recognition makes of the reflection over the classical authors of such tradition – Visconde de Uruguai, Tavares Bastos, Silvio Romero, Joaquim Nabuco, Ruy Barbosa, Euclides da Cunha, Alberto Torres, Oliveira Vianna, Azevedo Amaral, Gilberto Freyre, Sérgio Buarque de Holanda, Nestor Duarte, Caio Prado Jr., Raymundo Faoro, Victor Nunes Leal, Guerreiro Ramos, Florestan Fernandes, Celso Furtado, etc. – the instrument for an original interpellation of the society and the history which produces them. Along with the “quantitative expansion of post-graduate studies and the concomitant diversification of the institutional forms verified since the mid-seventies”, the existence of that tradition, largely “prior to this century’s outbreaks of economic growth and urbanization, and even to the establishment of the first universities”, would have contributed to the formation and consolidation of a relatively autonomous political science in Brazil (Lamounier, 1982:407). The reflection about political and social thought, however, revealed itself too rebel to be treated as a mere ideological pre-history to be abandoned as soon as granted the access to the academic institutionalization of the discipline. On the contrary, it has showed itself as a necessary antecedent capable of being continually reaffirmed by the unfolding of the institutionalized science – as an indicator of the existence of a body of problems and intellectual solutions, a theoretical and methodological stock to which the authors are obliged to refer in confronting the new questions presented by the social development, and a sharp instrument for the regulation of our internal market of ideas in its interchanges with the world market.

Certainly, part of this rebelliousness and capacity for interpellation has to do with the centrality of the “classical” authors’ role – including the “local” ones – in the social sciences. Some anomaly may exist here. In fact, in a homemade research involving a small but senior group of social scientists, on which would be the twentieth century Brazilian most important works and authors, the answers didn’t reveal theoretical or empirical studies carried out according to good methodological manuals, with the exception of *Casa-Grande & Senzala* (1933) and *Sobrados e Mocambos* (1936), by Gilberto Freyre; *Formação Econômica do Brasil* (1954), by Celso Furtado; *Os Donos do Poder* (1958), by Raymundo Faoro; *Raízes do Brasil* (1936), by Sérgio

Buarque de Holanda; *Coronelismo, Enxada e Voto* (1948), by Victor Nunes Leal; *Formação do Brasil Contemporâneo* (1942) and *Evolução Política do Brasil* (1933), by Caio Prado Júnior; *A Função Social da Guerra na Sociedade Tupinambá* (1952) and *A Integração do Negro na Sociedade de Classes* (1964), and other books by Florestan Fernandes; *Populações Meridionais do Brasil* (1920) and *Instituições Políticas Brasileiras* (1949), by Oliveira Vianna; and *Os Sertões* (1902), by Euclides da Cunha (Schwartzman, 1999)¹.

Assuming as a standard the natural sciences – which progress by forgetting their founders – and disregarding the nature of the social sciences – whose work, under a certain aspect, resembles that of Penelope, who, to achieve her goals, needs to remake her own path – a simplistic interpretation would not hesitate in qualifying such a situation as a resistance to adopt the methodological and technical procedures which would characterize true Science, an indication of how belated we would be on the ground of professionalization and institutionalization of knowledge. Letting aside this sectarianism, however, what is revealed by the list above is that historicists and anti-historicists, holists and methodological individualists, humanists and adepts of scientism, we all have learned how to think about the country by means of those thinkers. This reality, an inseparable part of the experience of intellectual generations, from those in their eighties to those in their twenties, is in itself sufficient to disqualify the contempt sometimes devoted to them – as alchemists before the chemists, as literature for the enjoyment of mind on Sundays, as relevant solely from the perspective of the history of science. Despite the old fashioned character of many of their theoretical propositions and empirical bases, it is a fact that they continue to be read as witnesses of the past and as sources of problems, concepts, hypotheses and arguments for the scientific investigation of the present².

In this sense, those researchers who accepted the challenge of moving around in this frontier zone early recognized the power of the “specific narrative form” generated by our tradition - the historical essay on the national formation – and, at the same time, the need to submit texts and investigated realities to systematic treatment and control, according to the methods of specialized research (Lamounier, 1982:411)³. As a reflection, the research on politico-social thought extends a tradition that has been accumulating at least since the sixties and seventies of the nineteenth century, whose conspicuous example is perhaps Silvio Romero’s certainly complicated, but pertinent intent, in a moment of turning point and breakdown of a world, of putting the house in order and verifying the evolution of the literature as function of the country’s evolution (Candido, 1978). As academic species, however, it gains autonomy in relation to literary studies only in the years 1950, when the debate over the course to be impressed to economic development becomes acute, the university is consolidated, sociology surpasses literature as the dominant form of reflection on society, and the intellectual and moral direction, until then exerted by the catholic thought, sees itself defeated by a variety of orientations having materialism and laicism in common. It has defined or renewed some of its main interpretative schemes in the 1970’s, when it became evident that the “necessary” association between industrialization and democracy was no more than an “optimistic equation”⁴, the investigation on the nature of the State became impositive, the examination of the bases of the authoritarian rule – formulated in grand style in the beginning of the Vargas era – came to the foreground, and the University began to get free from the competition of others agencies producing ideas, such as the institutions and programmatic parties of the old left. And it left the periphery towards the plain intellectual citizenship only at the end of the century, when the exhaustion of the national-developmentist State became clearly evident, specialization exacerbated the fragmentation of the intellectual world, society was confronted with the imperative of reformulating its institutions and redefine its place in the world; and, conscious of its own force, an academic community could finally confess its intellectual debts towards the essayists.

It seems to exist, therefore, an intimate relation between the cyclical character of the interest for those “interpreters of Brazil” and the historical and cultural dynamics of Brazilian politics, or, more specifically, some connection of sense between that cultural explosion and the critical

juncture – global change and, under a certain aspect, concentrated in time, forcing the reorganization of the spheres of our existence and the reformulation of the mental frameworks that until then schematized our knowledge⁵ – in which we are living, only comparable to the periods opened by the Abolition of slavery and the 1930 Revolution. It all occurs as if the endeavor of “thinking (about) the thought” is ignited at the moments in which our ill formation becomes clearer, and the nation and its intelligentsia see themselves constrained to spiritually remake the path through which they had already passed, before embarking on a new adventure – to decline or submerge afterwards. Perhaps it is not excessive to use here the metaphor of the Minerva’s owl, which only takes flight at nightfall. Not by chance, and contrary to the usual image, that “narrative form” consolidated by tradition is far from being a phenomenon of youth; it is a sort of maturity, supposing previous intellectual accumulation and stylistic refinement. But, in this case, it would be convenient to take it till the end and acknowledge that, if it is not possible to have the “adequate perspective over the present without accepting the exemplarity of that heritage” (Weffort, 2000:19), the reflection on political thought, comprehensive by nature, may also provide glimpses over the signs of the new world.

Given such theoretical accumulation – and perhaps because, besides striving to produce “transparency over reality”, it aspires to be a “constitutive part of it” (Werneck Vianna, 1997:213) –, the (study of) politico-social thought has been capable of discriminating, in Brazilian political and ideological evolution, the existence of determined “styles”, forms of thought extraordinarily persistent in time, intellectual modes of relation with reality which subsume even the more authentic products of institutionalized science, establishing problematics and continuities which allow situating and placing under a new light much of contemporary political proposals and scientific analyses. Here too, as in other parts of the world, the elucidation of the spiritual struggles of the past ends up revealing itself a necessary assumption for the proposition of political strategies for the present.

ASSUMPTIONS AND HYPOTHESES

What interests me, therefore, is to investigate the existence of these “intellectual families” in Brazil, to recognize their main formal characteristics and excavate their genealogy. Firstly, to verify in what measure the concepts of “organic idealism” and “constitutional idealism”, originally formulated by Oliveira Vianna (1939)⁶, are able – since, for sure, treated in a way that assures neutralizing his petitions of principle and voiding such concepts of what they have of ideological justification of a project of power and monopole of knowledge – to describe and analyze the main “forms of thought” which have dominated the Brazilian political thought from the last quarter of the nineteenth century onwards. Then, to circumscribe those (intellectual families) which, in the process of naturalization of industrial Brazil, have been delineated in the opposite sense and, despite their weaknesses, have constituted the first anti-aristocratic conceptions in the country, providing the general outlines of all the social and economic reforms proposed until the rise of neo-liberalism – as “middle-class radical thought” and “Marxism of communist matrix”⁷, these legitimate fruits of “our revolution”. And, finally, to formulate a hypothesis about the manner through which these tendencies have responded to the challenges proposed by the historical-political development of the country. Without letting aside the examination of the substantive content of ideologies and world-visions, the analytical emphasis will fall on the description of the underlying “forms of thought” – intellectual structures and theoretical categories, from which reality is apprehended, practical experience elaborated and historical action organized. To delineate a map of intellectual structures historically crystallized as analytical *a priori*s, and understand how they are articulated with the political perspective which is mobilized – that’s the nucleus of this work.

Centered on the examination of the main texts and concepts materializing such forms of thought, the discussion is not reducible to another of the indefinite number of readings of authors or contexts irremediably situated in the past. Let’s accept momentarily, for

argumentative purposes, the Skinnerian assumptions regarding this question. According to them, the intellectual historian shall not worry with the present validity or meaning of past ideas, for, in dealing with particular answers to particular epochal problems, the history of ideas and political theories would do so in such a way that the meaning of concepts formulated in the past would not have an independent life out of the context in which they were produced. So, they could not be transposed to the present, except illegitimately (Skinner, 1988:29-67), what implies his consequent assumption of incommensurability between different times and rigid separation between explanation and interpretation, between theory and history. Even so, it would be possible to assume as a presupposition that, during the period comprehended by this study, there were profound changes, but not any ontological radical mutation of an entire historical constellation. Cyclical modifications occurred, as well as the emergence of new conceptions, theories and interpretations in response to the problems posed by social development, but did not alter or did not exhaust the basic structure of reality over which our authors have reflected.

On the other hand, Skinner's argument admits two moments that should be treated separately: from the thesis according to which ideas and theories are explicable only through the (linguistic) context in which they are inserted, he derives the consequence that any interpretation exceeding the limits of this strict historical (or historicist?) meaning should be refused. The first reasoning leads to a fierce and consistent criticism to the anachronisms, especially to the usual way of treating the great texts of political thought, voiding them of historicity, as if they were all "contributions" to some kind of *theoria* or *philosophia perennis*. The second ends up leading to a scission between theory and history, between the historical and systematic moments in the treatment of ideas and in the understanding of a text, blocking any relation between contemporary theoretical interests and researches about the meaning of historical texts⁸.

From the perspective here adopted, on the contrary, not only the object to be investigated is not an archeological preciousness, but its explanation cannot as well be dissociated from the contemporary debate of which it is a moment and constitutive part. In such condition, one could not avoid confronting distinct readings of Brazilian political thought, especially the main models of interpretation formulated in the last decades, verifying simultaneously to what extent there is compatibility or rupture between the classical formulations of those conventionally denominated "interpreters of Brazil" and the intellectual work being produced at the University according to the methods of specialized investigation. In fact, if one of the particularities of the study of political thought is that it aspires to be a constitutive part of the object under study, then, in the examination of its great works, the reference to those readings "shall operate [...] as an element of control and, at various moments, as a polemic dimension against the analysis seeking to understand a coherent and original thought from its exterior"⁹ (Cohn, 179:XIII-XIV). But also as a probatory element for the hypotheses suggested below, so far as originals and exegeses converge for the formation of the same field, whose political-cultural impacts, more than analogous, will be interchangeable. On the whole, they end up constituting the "tradition", with the *exegesis* prolonging, reinterpreting, renewing and, at the limit, reinventing it. Reversed the perspective, tradition – and, with it, the forms of thought that it discriminates – persist in these re-readings which, in their turn, interpellate works and concepts from agendas and circumstances partly unprecedented, imposing new outlines and combinations.

That said, I take as an assumption that no great constellation of ideas can be understood without taking into account the historical problems to which it seeks to answer, and without taking into consideration the specific forms in which it is formulated and discussed, at the same time that no great constellation of ideas can be entirely settled in its context (Femia, 1988)¹⁰. In this sense, here are the main hypotheses I intend to investigate. The first of them refers to the possibility of – without impairing its international mediations and without neglecting the theoretical specificity of these authors or the diversity of historical contexts in which they act – situating the present liberalism in a line of continuity coming from the diagnostic of Tavares Bastos on the Asian character inherited from the Portuguese metropolis by the Colonial State, passing

through Raymundo Faoro's thesis, according to which the problem is the persistence of a bureaucratic-patrimonialist status group that has been able to secularly reproduce itself, and leading, as suggested by Simon Schwartzman and other "Americanists", to the proposition of (dis-)construction of a State that proceeds to carry out a rupture with the "Iberian" tradition and to impose the predominance of the market, or of civil society, and of the mechanisms of representation over those of cooptation, populism and "delegation"¹¹.

Similarly, I suggest that we can see in the concept of "formalism" – with its discrepancy between norm and behavior and its presumption of a strategy of induced change in a relatively disarticulated society –, as well as in the distinction between "hypercorrectness" and "critical pragmatism", proposed by Guerreiro Ramos in the 1960's, or in the works of Wanderley Guilherme dos Santos on the liberal praxis, and in those of Bolivar Lamounier on the authoritarian thought in the turning point of the 1980's, as much marks of this academic interest for Brazilian intellectual history as moments themselves of reconstruction of the ideal orientations of socially rooted ideological tendencies. Thus, while the concepts of "formalism" and "instrumental authoritarianism" configured spiritualized and "axiologically neutral" versions of the *saquarema* critique of the supposed utopianism of the liberals, the critique of the "ideology of State" stressed the contraposition between different propositions of organization of society, either from the State or from the Market, so as to restore the concern with the institutional engineering of the "constitutional idealists". While the former two renewed, from the left, Viscount of Uruguay's and Oliveira Vianna's "organic idealism", the third implicitly resumed Tavares Bastos, at least in privileging the question of the form of government and in considering that political reforms, and only them, would be able to render democracy representative and clear the way for economic and social reforms¹². In the same sense, it will not be surprising to find out that, although representing as well a remarkable effort in absorbing the "technological advancements" of international social science, the (bulk of the) most important works published in the country in the last decades, on elections, parties and party systems, government, institutions, and public policies, may be included in one or another of those orientations. Once situated the different authors and currents, it becomes more intelligible the way in which each author or tendency responds to the challenges of "our revolution", takes sides in face of the political agenda of the moment, expresses long duration social tendencies – and not just academic trends or individual tendencies –, strives to conquer public opinion and to morally and intellectually direct the action of large social groups.

Once established such main hypotheses, it is convenient to acknowledge that the 1950's represent a remarkable turning point in these processes of formation and crystallization of forms of thought. In those years occurs the routinization of the 1930's "technological innovations" in social thought – rediscovery of Brazil as theme of research, absorption of sociology as a method of approaching reality, reflection on the State's nature and structure, recognition of the social question, etc. –, as well as a profound change in emphasis, style and problematics, this time marked not only by the construction of the State, but also by the emergence, as a problem, of the society and its transformation. In these conditions, the powerful idea organizing the intellectual field is the idea of development, and the underlying question is that of democracy. Prefigured when the need for State modernization occupied the forefront, the theoretical problem of the structure and dynamics of a society in process of constitution becomes the determinant problem, and soon distinct and allied or opposed projects for "overcoming backwardness" struggle to impress direction to social change. This is a moment when not only new social and political subjects emerge, but also a juncture in which the relation – continuity or discontinuity – between new and old actors (intellectuals as well as politicians) becomes more discernible. In this process, as I have already mentioned, Catholicism's capacity of intellectual and moral direction is living its final days, literature reaches its peak and decline as the matrix of the Brazilian intellectuals' way of being, the culturalist discourse loses breath, and sociology – which, differently from what occurred in the thirties, incorporates political economy – becomes the main form of intellection of reality.

Well, this remarkable social and intellectual mutation does not affect merely mainstream forms of thinking. Although “organic idealism” and “constitutional idealism” are the oldest and permanent ways of thinking, they obviously are not the only ones: any examination of the ensemble of intellectual and ideological development cannot ignore those socially minoritarian – although intellectually influent – and markedly anti-aristocratic forms, which could not but be produced in a society revolved by the generalization of wage labor, by urbanization and industrialization.

In the interview in which he presents the hypothesis of the existence of a “radical middle-class thought”, Antonio Candido suggests that it involved most of the socialists and communists, and has been crystallized from the years 40 and 50 onwards, especially at the Universidade de São Paulo, and in spite of the elitist intention of its founders¹³. Against those who demanded “revolution”, Candido remarks that the biggest interest within such ideological constellation was in “favoring a radical thought, and not (in) assuming a (an impossible) revolutionary position”, what would have represented an enormous advancement in face of the “bulk of the thought (which) was massively conservative and, not rarely, reactionary”. It could be added: despite the role performed by that University – largely explored by literature, which has also pointed out the defeat of a similar academic project in Rio (Miceli, 2001a; 2001b)¹⁴ – the phenomenon was far from being a state level or even regional one. If this is the case, it may be possible to acknowledge the centrality of Sérgio Buarque de Holanda, and to delineate such a phenomenon as to find identities among so diverse authors as Manoel Bonfim, Nestor Duarte, Victor Nunes Leal, Celso Furtado, and Fernando Henrique Cardoso. And perhaps it will not be excessive to characterize this democratic thought as *socializante* [with socialist leanings], almost always socialist, of liberal matrix, sometimes constitutionalist. It is convenient, therefore, to differentiate it from what in another place I have denominated as “Marxism of communist matrix”. At least from the second half of the 1950’s onwards, and in its “positive” version, such thought acknowledged that the Brazilian political process would allow for reconciling capitalism and democracy, refused any “explosive” conception of revolution, and supported as well a “revolution within the order” commanded by a large front of modern social forces generated by that process. Besides, while some kind of causal pluralism distinguishes the former, what characterizes the later, from an analytical perspective, is always the quest, successful or not, for a unity between, say, the infra and the superstructure in explaining the social realm¹⁵.

Taken as a whole, such forms of thought did not, or not necessarily, exclude each other: as social and ideological phenomena, they penetrate each other and reciprocally influence one another. On the other hand, naturally, other delimitations (*recortes*) are possible. Not all “politico-social thinkers” fit in this or that lineage; counterposed souls cohabite together in several of them, and not always the proclaimed souls are the real ones. As it occurs in all families, sometimes the closest are the more distant, and nobody can prevent a Montecchio from falling in love with a Capuleto. That, without mentioning that there are always marginal, independent or bizarre figures. But it is there, unfortunately, where the beauty of concrete analysis is to be found. In such situations, we can see more or less consistent blends of left-wing “ethics” and right-wing “epistemologies” and vice-versa, ambiguous polarizations or productive conciliations, sublime coherence or ill-seasoned eclecticism. But what is important is not transforming the “elected affinities” between organic idealism and conservatism, between constitutional idealism and liberalism, between historical materialism and socialism, into one-way roads, into cause and effect relations or homologies between ideologies and political positions – even because any world conception is a field of forces, being related to and having ramifications in several social groups and spiritual manifestations, supposing a right, a left and a center wing, and admitting different theories and interpretations. Thus, intellectual alliances are possible among thinkers that are politically distant, but close in the way of thinking. As says Michel Löwy, elective affinity

“[...] is not the ideological affinity inherent to the different variants of the same social and cultural tendency (for instance, between economical and political liberalism, between socialism and egalitarianism, etc.). The reciprocal election and choice implies a previous *distance*, a certain *spiritual wanting* that must be fulfilled, and a certain ideological heterogeneity. On the other hand, the *Wahlverwandtschaft* is by no means identical to ‘correlation’, a vague term designating merely the existence of a link between two distinct phenomena: it points out to a precise type of *significant relation* which has nothing in common with (for example) the statistical correlation between economic growth and demographic decline. The elective affinity is not as well synonymous for ‘influence’, as far as it implies a quite more active relation and a reciprocal articulation which may end up in a fusion). It is a concept that allows us to justify interaction processes which are not dependent on direct causality or on a ‘expressive’ relation between form and content (for instance, the religious form as ‘expression’ of a political and social content)” (1989:18, emphases in the original)¹⁶.

FORMS OF APPROACH

So considered the question, it becomes clear that the chosen path could not be that of biography, be it written in a psychological or intellectual key; nor could it be that of sociology, be it that of the intellectuals or of its institutions; nor even the path of the history of mentalities, with its approach to attitudes, behaviors and unconscious collective representations. From the perspective here stressed, the key to the problem is not to know if author X or Y was an aristocrat by birth, a *parvenu* or a member of the decadent oligarchy in search for social reclassification, since, although this has to be taken into account, it does not explain by itself a theoretical structure, a work of art or a scientific problem. In fact, it is not appropriate to explain the quality or specificity of a political thought by evoking its author’s “class origin”. And, enlarging the question, intellectual production shall never be read as an ideological reflex of a preexistent social group – as if it were possible that a “class” existed, historically identifiable by the place it occupies within the process of production, and, then, its “conscience” or its “world vision” followed¹⁷.

Neither is it the case of reducing ideas and ways of thinking to the micro-political strategies of the *coteries* to which they occasionally confer institutional identity; nor of concentrating the focus on the myriad of median quality works through which a determined understanding of things is refracted and propagates itself, even though their examination is certainly necessary for exploiting all the variables, for composing and hierarchizing the whole picture. I do not ignore, certainly, that ideas are not transformed into ideologies, or even into forms of thought, without being subjected to more or less systematic routinization processes, in which authors usually considered secondary and works soon forgotten perform fundamental roles. But, for this very reason, it is convenient to have in mind that what has been particularized by Gramsci in his note on the “number and quality of the representative system” is also applicable to intellectual processes: in them, what is measured is “exactly the effectiveness and the capacity for expansion and persuasion of the opinion of the few, active minorities, elites, avant-gardes, etc., i.e., its rationality or historicity or concrete functionality” (Gramsci, 2000:82). In such conditions, there is no way of escaping from the assumption according to which more important works, fundamental texts, more typical theoretical creations, are able – because more coherent, more extensive, more profound and more autonomous – to reveal the nature of an epoch and the consistency of a political conception, to allow men to take conscience of what they do, extracting all the implications of their own situation. In this sense, the reaction provoked in Oswaldo Aranha by reading *Formação Econômica do Brasil* is exemplary, as reports Celso Furtado himself: “Celso, you have explained to me the sense of what we have done at the time; then, I knew nothing about it”¹⁸. Naturally, the analysis emphasizes but one aspect of a wider set, yet the perspective mobilized will permit to interpellate the ideas of certain authors – in this case, without reductionisms – as moments of the constitution of specific actors, as intents of

diagnosing and solving real problems, of politically and culturally directing the action of determined social forces.

With Löwy, I'm not suggesting that an analysis of this type is incompatible with the recognition of the determinant role of economic and social conditions. But acknowledging such compatibility doesn't imply assuming ideas and forms as in direct conformity with the general development of society, or that they can be dissolved in their contexts (political, economic, or even linguistic), reduced to conjunctural political movements, necessarily described as homologous to the social groups or institutions where they were born. Naturally, forms and ideas don't fall from heaven, don't govern the world, and can't be thought at any moment or at any historical moment. They are rooted in the material conditions of life. To use the fortunate formulation of Carlos Nelson Coutinho, they are "condensed expressions of social constellations, privileged means of spiritually reproducing the real contradictions and, at the same time, of proposing a new way for confronting and overcoming them" (Coutinho, 2000:9). That's why they cannot be taken isolatedly, correlated case by case with events, groups or social phenomena. Forms and ideas are rather outcomes, translations of relations existing among groups within global society, and represent moments not only constituted by, but constitutive of these relations. Without mentioning that, when really significant, they survive their contexts of origin, are susceptible of universalization, and can be interpellated from other conditions and perspectives. As observed by Marx, "[...] the difficulty is not in understanding that Greek art and the *Epopée* are attached to certain forms of social development. The difficulty lies in the fact that they still offer us an aesthetical pleasure and still have, for us, in certain aspects, the value of norms and inaccessible models" (1974:131).

For this very reason, in an exploratory work like this, the safer path is to proceed from the ideas and forms towards the social realm – in fact, to consider the forms as crystallizations of the social, decantations of experience –, otherwise one risks introducing determinist assumptions into the analysis and to suppress *a priori* the richness of the mediations (Ehrard, 1977:181-184). Similarly, it is not the case of tracing straight lines between ideology and form of thinking, between the interpretation of the country and the political orientation that could be "deduced" from it, of judging that, given determined theory, certain politics should follow – even because such relations are far from being direct and univocal. In fact, the meaning that a theory, idea or interpretation eventually acquires, even within the context where it has been produced, does not always coincide with his formulator's intention and with the public receiving it. For more systematic and coherent that a set of ideas could be, its development is never entirely immanent, being always a response to real problems. Not only it is susceptible, within a certain margin of tolerance, to actualizations and reconstructions, but it can give rise to different politics – except if we accept the Stalinist methodology according to which the traitor and the treason were already in germen within the deviant ever since he was a child; or agree with that retrospective prophecy that considers the present "condemnation" of actions and theories as a necessary outcome of what someone wrote some 30 or 40 years ago. If thus it is, then it is clear that the sense – progressive or regressive – of each particular expression of conservatism, liberalism, liberal socialism or communism, does not exist in itself and can only be established as a function of the nature of the problems posed by society in a determined point of its development, and of the ability of their holders in giving adequate answers as well to the historical dilemmas as to the demands of the moment.

Nothing of that, however, prevents the recognition of the more general determinations attained by the Brazilian ideological process, or the detection not only, say, of liberalism in general, but of the more general determinations of liberalism, or conservatism for that matter, as they have been developed in Brazil, so as to stress what is common to different historical manifestations of the same basic orientation. Evidently, this general character, "this common element which is stressed through comparison is itself a complex whole, a complex set of different and divergent determinations" (Marx, 1974:110). Naturally, the purpose being the demarcation of continuities, lineages, traditions at the level of ideas and forms of thinking, we shall convene that this is not

an easy task in a country with a historiography that insists – dryly, with regret or ironically, the effect is the same – in saying that intellectual life has never been more than an entertainment of idle gentlemen, that there has never existed conservatism among us because there is no thinking amongst the so called conservatists, that liberalism has always been just a façade, that socialism has been no more than an amalgam between positivism and stupidity, etc.

With all these reservations, I think that the above proposed delimitation is pertinent. Posited the hypothesis, here is the corollary: even having as raw matter the “filthiness of contrasts” referred to by Mário de Andrade – for, “as it happens to occur with all the other American peoples, our national formation is not natural, not spontaneous, not, so to speak, logical” (Andrade, 1978:8) – , Brazilian ideological life is not aleatory. On the contrary, it makes sense and system, although being (or having been) discontinuous, susceptible to cycles of cultural substitution of imports, which sometimes seem to make *tabula rasa* of all former configurations. Whatever the awareness about their own history, or the degree of recognition of their own ancestors, their main currents weren’t born yesterday and cannot be explained as a function of conjunctures alone. So, the reflection about this history and its intellectual cycles may be a good entrance door for understanding and explaining the nature and limits of contemporary political projects seeking to direct the processes of Brazilian capitalism’s reconstruction, to deepen or restrain political democracy, and to promote an autonomous insertion of the country in the movement of the world market.

FORMS OF THINKING

Now, any attempt to define the vision about the country and the political program characterizing the Brazilian conservatism – which, in the nineteenth century, has been responsible for building up the State and the maintenance of territorial unity; in the twentieth, provided the basic guidelines for action of the dominant political groups and bureaucracies in the country (from *Tenentismo* and the first *Varguismo* to *Geiselismo*, from Agamenon Magalhães to Antonio Carlos Magalhães); and whose intellectual origin goes back in large measure to Viscount of Uruguay and Oliveira Vianna (Carvalho, 2002)¹⁹ – will acknowledge that they are based in the thesis that it is not possible to construct a liberal (and democratic) State in a society considered non-liberal. The practical consequence of such a conception is that society should be patronized and that political and administrative centralization should be affirmed. The image of Brazil emerging from conservative thought is that it is a fragmented, atomized, amorphous and inorganic country, with a society deprived of internal solidarity ties and depending on the State to remain united. In this land of barons, where “whoever can rules, whoever is sensible obeys”, ordinary man only find some security, freedom and relative dignity, if serving someone with power. Otherwise, he will be unprotected, unless the State intervenes. Contrary to what applies to Europe and the United States, the State should not be taken here as the principal threat to civil liberty, but as its only guarantee.

Criticizing the liberals for their blindness in face of reality and their intent of transplanting overseas institutions, Oliveira Vianna suggests that, in this society of “rude” oligarchies, political democracy constitutes a great illusion. Its institutional apparatus, heavy, sluggish, inefficient and corrupt, is not apt to manage the dynamisms and challenges of the modern world. Its subservience to universal suffrage and political parties – that are but gangs brothered against common welfare – just delivers the State to private interests and to the *coronéis*. Its faith in local power fosters the camarillas [*curriolas*] and provincial celebrities. Therefore, it would be important to resume the work of centralization developed by those “audacious reactionary” of the Empire. The tasks should be those of educating the elites, preventing class struggles, and building up order with precedence over freedom; of giving the Judiciary independence, limiting state autonomy, and organizing the population in corporations; and constructing a civil (civilized) society by means of a new centralized State. And only then – if such after existed! –

allow for political democracy. Paradoxically, the good European order applies here: only after civil liberty secured, should we launch ourselves to the construction of politics.

The predominance of authority over freedom would result as well, and mainly, from the inorganic character and atomization of society. Without a powerful State – technically qualified, immune to ‘partycracy’ [*partidocracia*] and to the politics of the politicians, able to subordinate private to social interest, to control the disruptive effects of the possessive individualism, of the market, etc. –, both, authority and freedom, do not survive. Besides, in a territory whose geography conspires against politics, the only chance of the nation depends on the ruins of the federation. Civil liberty, national and territorial unity assured by politico-administrative centralization, and a pedagogue bureaucratic State, that’s the conservative program.

On the liberal side, the purpose is that of seeking, as in New England, “the greatest progress of society through the greatest expansion of individual freedom” (Tavares Bastos, 1976), what, in a paradoxical country like ours, demands a clear project of State reconstruction, without which individual freedom cannot be implemented. The entire dilemma has to do with the distinction between political centralization and administrative decentralization in a country that always had difficulty in separating them, with the relations that should be established between central power and the provincial powers to be strengthened, between elected and nominated institutions, between a sovereign Legislative, on the one hand, and a responsible Executive, on the other. And with the role that should be assigned to a strong Judiciary in a political order topped by a Moderator Power – explicit, as in the Empire, or implicit, as in almost the entire Republican period. In this perspective, the determinant question is, thus, that of the form of government, without whose resolution Brazilian democracy will remain a regrettable misunderstanding.

As much as the “organic idealists”, the “constitutional idealism” of the liberals asseverates the centrality of the State’s role in the Brazilian social formation, but with the radical difference that, for the former, it is the organic character of society that poses the need for a powerful State patronizing and aggregating it, while, for the latter, it is the presence of the all-powerful State that suffocates and fragments society. Here, the ill-fated independence of the State in face of civil society – the birth of the State before naissance of Civil Society, its abusive predominance, the misfortune of individuals and social groups living from and by the State – seems to be not an outcome of the conditions related to the form of the territory’s occupation, the geographic dispersion of human groups, and the choices ‘against the grain’ made by the political elites that founded the Empire and the Second Republic, as understood by the analytical strategy of the organicists. On the contrary, the liberal presupposition is based on the internal history of the metropolis, on the transoceanic migration of the Portuguese State, and on the severe and niggard culture of the origins (idem:29 and ss.)²⁰.

Made such diagnostic and the critique of the Brazilian State (and of the political *cartorial* [‘of notary’s office’] culture that it generates) from the perspective, say, of the constrained “civil society”, the constitutionalist strategy – be it reformist as that of the insurgent *mineiros* and *paulistas* in 1842, federalist as in *A Província*, revolutionary as in the first edition of *Os Donos do Poder*, or even radical conservative as in the program of neo-liberal reforms of the 1990’s (which, evidently, abandon several precepts of classical liberalism, as those characterizing Tocqueville, Stuart Mill, Tavares Bastos or Joaquim Nabuco) – is directed to restrain the State to limits considered necessary in order to propitiate the affirmation of society’s “autonomy”, so as to permit the flowing of the dialectics between individual and associative freedom, representation and public opinion, private and national interest – and, finally, to allow for the reconstruction of the inclusive society.

However, what makes peculiar the “constitutional idealism” of liberals is, as observed by Oliveira Vianna, the concern with forms, the faith in the power of the written word, the belief that good law would produce good society, the idea according to which the country’s problems

are fundamentally political and institutional, and should only be resolved by means of political reforms, the insistent conviction that, in the absence of these political reforms, economic and social reforms would not be possible or would not be sustainable. Saying it in a positive formulation, the key category of the liberal strategy is that of the historically cumulative “national reconstruction” (Lamounier, 1999). For this very reason, it is not the case of accepting *a priori* the adjective “utopic” applied by Oliveira Vianna (and a long depreciative tradition towards liberals) as a synonym for “constitutional”. Not only because the utopism is not a liberal prerogative, but also because of the presumption that “organic idealism”, hegemonic along the largest part of the political history of the Monarchy and the Republic, does not survive to its own criteria for criticizing the “constitutionals”. Such critique, in that author’s own words referring to the utopic character of the liberal constitutionalism, may be summarized as a “[...] disparity between the greatness and the impressing eurhythmy of its structure and the insignificance of its actual efficacy” (Oliveira Vianna, 1939:10-11)²¹.

Coherent with its assumptions, Brazilian liberalism – either monarchist or republican – assumes as decisive the question of representation, proposes federalism (ultimately) and the parliamentary system, acknowledges the need for a strong Executive, supports the independence and the role of the Judiciary as constitutional arbiter, in whose aristocracy it places its hopes of preserving freedom. It thinks as well political action and the organization of political life as a space whose center is Parliament, which should function as a kind of judicial court, where truth or the best outcome emerges by means of arguments and replicas, of shocks of interests in an agonistic but not antagonistic form, and of prudent settlements between the parts involved, all of them supposedly free and autonomous in relation to the external world, and essentially moved by the concern of promoting common welfare²².

Of all these aspects, perhaps the less shared has been that of federalism. Considered the recognition of the unitary structure of the State, not only the question of representation became more significant, but few interpreters of Brazil showed enthusiasm for that principle. Only sporadically the federalism became object of scientific research, as it happens to occur in our days, in this case boosted by the crisis of the State and the Presidential regime, and by the fiscal war in the context of the 1988 Constitution. Among those who thought the country, the great exception, naturally, is Tavares Bastos, and, with him, the entire abolitionist current – Nabuco, Rebouças, Ruy – which postulated a federative monarchy as means of making the abolition and saving the monarchic system. Their defeat didn’t lack the mark of personal tragedies²³. The more radical option was perhaps that adopted by Ruy, either because of having perceived prior to the others the incompatibility between Monarchy and Federation, or because the latter was for him more important than the Republic, to which he only adhered when convinced that the monarchy wouldn’t implant it.

If federalism has been scarce as reflection and ideology, the federation “is a phenomenon of our entire past”, as said Nabuco when proposing this principle, in 1885, to the Liberal Party, which treated him with contempt. Federation has been subjacent to Brazilian politics either as an aspiration of regional elites towards autonomy (as in Frei Caneca or in the Farrapos’ rebellion²⁴) – and even with separatist intention (as in Alberto Salles [1983], for whom the separation would be the starting point of a process having federation as its aim²⁵) –, or as an instrument for restraining the State’s authoritarianism (as in the struggles against the dictatorships of the twentieth century). In fact, alongside the strong fear in face of plebeian revolts, the fact that federalism could represent a risk to the preservation of slavery made of it one of the political ghosts behind the option of the founding fathers for the unitary and centralized State. Although geography and the decentralized administration of the preceding centuries (at least until the *‘civilização das minas gerais’* and the experiment of the period of the Marquis de Pombal) pointed towards another direction, such option was rendered definitive by the “audacious reactionaries” who strongly repressed the revolts of the Regency period whenever they threatened to transcend the limits of an intra-elites conflict; and was reinvented by the industrialist policies – and the two dictatorships – that molded much of modern Brazil.

Federalism, however, has never been a one-way road, either because it was embraced by different social groups and interests, or because its sense – progressive or regressive – has varied according to historical conjunctures, i.e., according to the nature of the problems in the agenda. Anyway, either connected to the orientation with which it has been historically confounded – when the support of decentralization or federation was strongly mingled with the interests of regional oligarchies –, or redeemed for what it represented as promise of pluralism and as element of negation of the Prussian road to capitalist development, ultimately implemented, the federalist doctrine seemed condemned to cyclically reincarnate in every critical juncture involving the social contract, the reformulation of the country's power arrangement. Perhaps for that very reason, its influence, although feeble, has not been restricted to the liberal field *strictu sensu*. It has been central, for instance, for the reflection of Celso Furtado who, according to Chico de Oliveira, was the single “interpreter of Brazil” to take seriously the federative idea in architecting a “cooperative regionalized federalism” as instrument for preventing the exclusion of the Northeastern region and to avoid the explosion of the nation by the radicalization of its internal disparities (Oliveira, 2003:80-81)²⁶. It has been also important for the Sao Paulo state communist current concerned with “local power”, which, in the 1960's and based on a reinterpretation of the role of the states in the 1930 Revolution and in the 1964 coup d'État, has confronted the unitarianism and anti-liberalism of *prestismo* and the left involved with the armed struggle, and proposed as a counterpart the long way of the institutions, i.e., an electoral strategy of encircling central power through the conquest of the metropolitan centers' city halls and the main states' governments (Brandão, 1989).

TEMPORALITIES

Once outlined the analytical field, delimited the object and formulated the hypotheses orienting this study, it is now convenient to specify that the effort of disentangling “elected affinities” among thinkers or theories, subterranean continuities of long duration and not always discerned by the authors-actors themselves, etc., has nothing to do with a search for “trans-epochal ideological matrices” - to use the words of José Guilherme Merquior, of fond memory, in his critique to Richard Morse's *Prospero's Mirror*, whose reasoning would be based on the assumption of the existence of a “political culture whose *forma mentis* was elaborated by Phillipine Spain, and lasts until today” (Merquior, 1989:13)²⁷. It is not even the case of imagining, on the level of ideological constellations – the sphere of the real that changes more slowly and have greater surviving capacity –, a sort of reproduction of a five-century unmoving history, which, from the right and from the left, some “interpretations of Brazil” have injected into common sense. According to such theories what was to become Brazilian society was already civil and economically prefigured when the Portuguese settled here their first trading post or began to produce for the world market. On the contrary, in this field one has to start with the extremely high rate of mortality of intellectual initiatives concerned with our experience, acknowledging that the history of ideas, of ideologies and political theories, is largely a vast cemetery, so that the constitution of “intellectual families” and forms of thinking is rather an outcome than a presupposition – they are patterns constituted along reiterated attempts to respond to the dilemmas posed by social development, and undertaken by subjects and social groups under difficult and varied circumstances.

Effectively, although laying their roots on a particularly adverse historical formation, the intellectual matrices susceptible of being traced could only properly exist in a society in which capitalism had already been deeply rooted. The precocious option for the “spirit of capitalism” is insufficient, and the possibility of tracing them requires that it had already achieved to “Wernernize” or create much of the local institutions, so that the civilization being prepared here would then be, as would say Euclides da Cunha, condemned to progress²⁸. In these terms, the investigation delimitates as a starting point the basic rupture, in our short five-century history, occurred in the eighteen hundreds. Notwithstanding, it is necessary to specify that, however

much continuities exist between the Colony and the Empire, or between the Empire and the Republic, the creation of the political State and the liquidation of the colonial slavery – faces of the same phenomenon, although distant in time – introduce discontinuities which redefine the content and depth of those matrices, objecting the idea of a history always the same. As Caio Prado Júnior says, the nineteenth century

“[...] marks a decisive phase in our evolution and gives rise to a new phase in all fields, social, political, and economic [...]. Its interest derives above all from two circumstances: on the one hand, it provides us, in final account, with the work accomplished by three centuries of colonization, and shows us what in it is found of a more characteristic and fundamental character, eliminating from the picture, or at least relegating to the background, what is accidental or intercurrent in those three hundred years of history. It is a synthesis of them. On the other hand, it is a precious and irreplaceable key that allows following and interpreting the ulterior historical process and its outcome – contemporary Brazil” (1975:5)²⁹.

Such intellectual matrices are, therefore, products, outcomes of processes for which multiple factors concur. Although already known, they could only have been effectively recognized when the social tissue acquired a certain density, society internalized its “decision center”, intellectuals and groups found in the social sciences the tools for reflecting about themselves; and, to the extent that, in the course of dramatic processes of cultural substitution of imports, they achieved to constitute a culture, even if feeble, in the Sartrean sense, that is, which instills a series of problems, interpretations, analytical and political successes or failures, constituting a common ground to which the new readings are obliged to refer in confronting the questions posed by the historical circumstances³⁰.

For this very reason, and again, it is not the case of postulating entelechies hovering above the social processes. And even less of always seeing the old in the new, as it uses to happen to those who see in everything features of “conservative consciousness”, “bureaucratic status group”, “formalism”, “conciliation”, etc. In the moment when they appear – in confrontations about the Empire, as during the crisis of the *Segundo Reinado* [Second Reign] – or are reinvented – as in the criticisms to the republicanism of the First Republic, or even in the shock between *desenvolvimentismo* and liberalism in the mid of the twentieth century –, nothing assures that these, and not others, will be crystallized. As usually occurs with socially significant phenomena, here too such presupposed forms of thinking can only survive if reiterated by the unfolding of the historical development, and it is not possible to define previously which of their significative contents and intellectual schemes will survive. Each reposition, whose reach and depth is not always consciously perceptible in the moment when it occurs, expresses a change of quality (onwards or backwards) in the ideological phenomenon and in the historical process itself.

THE PROBLEM: VEILED CONTINUITY

In fact, one of the clearest manifestations of the scarce Brazilian cultural and ideological history is the fact that it is not, or was not, truly possible to analytically situate intellectuals in “schools”, “institutions”, currents and collective tendencies, although this is one of the forms through which intellectuals use to construct their identities. Such pretension is frequently nothing more than wishful thinking (of actors) or arbitrary imputations (by analysts). The will to see “what yet does not exist, the nation” has been responsible for this singular institutionalist anachronism that consists in disciplinarily and institutionally sectioning [an intellectual field] where cultural activity is incipient and there are no consolidated institutions, and intellectual and political types clearly differentiated. The analyst accepts as a criterion of truth what the author thought of himself, takes as good the descriptions of reality with which each individual or group strived for holding their positions, having in general as reference some European

intellectual enterprise – not always important, but thought as being so – of which they considered themselves representatives in the Tropic (Alonso, 2002:32 and Introduction). Perhaps, the more incisive criticism on this anachronism has been that of Mário de Andrade, who mistrusted the hasty generalizations and the critiques prematurely synthetic, and who, in terms of Brazilian politico-social thought, prescribed an analysis author by author, possibly work by work, before venturing at the ideal-typical constructions. In an article of 1943 against Tristão de Athayde, then considered the most important literary critic of *Modernismo*, Mário de Andrade says:

“As a literary critic, Tristão de Athayde suffered from the, so to say, traditional shortcomings of Brazilian literary critique since Sílvio Romero. In this mess that Brazil is, our literary critics are impelled to join together personalities and works by the illusive precision of seeing what yet does not exist, the nation. Hence, a prematurely synthetic critique, many times contenting itself with hasty generalizations, [and with] others entirely false. Proclaiming our individualism, they *socialize everything*. While the attitude had to be to analyze personalities and, sometimes, even each work in particular, they synthesize the currents, imagining that knowledge about Brazil would come from the synthesis. Well, especially in relation to cultural phenomena, such synthesis is impossible: because, as it happens with all American peoples, our national formation is not natural, is not spontaneous, is not, so to say, logical. Therefore, the filthiness of contrasts we are. It is not yet the time for understanding the Brazilian soul by means of synthesis. Because, in this, or we fall in precarious and, moreover, confusing assertions, as when Tristão de Athayde declares that religious feeling ‘is the very Brazilian soul, what we have that is most different (*sic*), what we have that is more ours’ (:287); or even as that ineffable file compilation by Medeiros de Albuquerque, who censored a nationalist poet for praising the peanut, that ‘small foreign fruit, perhaps ordinary from Syria’” (Andrade, 1978:8, emphasis in the original).

It is not the case of discussing in detail this program of research, this mixture of nihilism and common sense, consisting in putting between parentheses every and any attempt to interpret Brazilian literary and intellectual evolution as a whole, and concentrating the efforts on fragments, because the individual trajectories are erratic, and the social and ideological ground on which they tread seems to be a marsh. Since then, anyway, such project has been in part accomplished – by the reasonable accumulation of monographic studies on authors and cultural movements, etc. – and, as such, surmounted. Without letting aside, what would have been foolish, the comprehensive interpretations, as, by the way, literary critique itself has explored better than anyone else.

Notwithstanding his side of bad humor, the fact is that, besides getting rid of these fooleries about “national character”, Mário de Andrade, among others, snapshotted the real substrate of Brazilian intellectual life and, in consequence, the difficulty in seizing the sense of what, for instance, Caetano Veloso, referring to the sophisticated popular Brazilian song, has once called the “evolutive line” of Brazilian culture. In order to avoid any teleology, perhaps one should always use the plural: evolutive lines. The difficulty in detecting them is not only academic, but has to do with a real problem: whatever the conception we have of what should be the “nation”, the fact is that, compared to other nations (to those whose construction, so to say, has not been an exclusive work of their elites prominently positioned in the State, but counted with the active participation of the subaltern classes, which, in their turn, achieved to force the door of the new order and take a seat, although lateral, at the table), the Brazilian nation continues to be singled out by structural heterogeneities, deeply rooted inequalities, and the existence of social groups with narrow possibilities or capacities for instilling institutions and values which could give support to their spiritual and political activity.

There is nothing new in this enunciation, whose naturalness has been exhaustively investigated by political sociology along the second half of the twentieth century. It is perhaps convenient to

add that the “filthiness of contrasts” mentioned by Mário de Andrade is a necessary consequence, maybe inevitable, of the process through which the type of social organization here established consecrates the dissociation between the “civil society” and the “Nation”. This dissociation represents so deeply rooted structures and dynamics that not even the extraordinary progress achieved on the ground of political democratization, in the last decades, has been sufficient to suppress the “special variety of bourgeois domination” referred to by Florestan, “which, in an organized and institutionalized way, resists the egalitarian pressures from the national structures of the established order, being superimposed to, and even denying, the integrative impulsions resulting from it” (Fernandes, 1976:302)³¹. From this point of view, the social and ideological consequences of this situation affect each and every particular cultural and political manifestation, as well as each and every social or intellectual group in the country.

In such a picture, in which broken lines conceal or superpose themselves to subterranean continuities, it will not be surprising to find out that such “evolutive lines”, “intellectual families” or “forms of thinking” are neither natural nor immediate. Effectively, the connections and continuities between representatives of a same intellectual current or family aren’t spontaneously given; they are not part of the existential experience of intellectual and political groups. Our lineages are not of the kind that can be proudly assumed. Illustrating this point by a contrast, we may recall what Senator Giorgio Amendola once said in the Italian Senate: “my great-grandfather was a Mazzinian, my grandfather a Garibaldian, my father an antifascist, and I am a communist – this is the march of civilization in Italy”. It doesn’t matter much that history has not corroborated the argument’s conclusion. The point is that a spiritual continuity of this kind has never been entirely established for Brazil, although certain conservative groups see the Empire as some sort of golden age of politics. Some relationship between Pedro I, Viscount of Uruguay and Getúlio Vargas is certainly acknowledged, but such connection has been at mostly intellectual, and rarely something having to do with life experience. In other words, it is something that must be intellectually reconstructed in order to become appropriated by experience. In this sense, its intellection depends on the historical moment, i.e., on the degree of awareness acquired by the actors about their own heritage. This, in turn, supposes systematic empirical exploration and previous theoretical work, without which such forms will not be exposed to light and incorporated into life experience.

Besides the case of Italy, if the above comparison is pertinent, it is convenient to remember the cultural effects of the “Prussian” cases of capitalist development, well explored in the literature. The fragmentary Brazilian history induced thinkers to frequently start from zero, many times totally ignoring those who, arriving before them, achieved analogous diagnostics and similar solutions, and to discover by themselves a series of previous formulations, having precarious awareness of those that, in the past, adopted confluent “methodological” perspectives. It is the case of observing that this is a phenomenon which is distinct from those exhaustively investigated by the sociology of science. Given the collective character of scientific activity, there is always the possibility that different researches arrive simultaneously to the same findings – which were, so to speak, in the air, in the atmosphere common to them all –, or that they unconsciously repress the influence exerted by others on themselves – especially their masters, or adversaries, or even intellectuals already dead. Nothing of that eliminates the collective and cumulative character of such activity. In our case, on the contrary, the usual is the occurrence of intellectual (and political) groups who behave as if history had begun with them, as if there would be a degree zero in politics or any other collective activity. As a counterpart to their perception of history as always the same, the novelty personified by these groups emerge in the (political or cultural) scenario as a radical negation of “all that is there”. And only after a few disillusionments, they become aware (when they do!) of the homology between such attempts and former attempts at dealing with the same historic and social dilemmas against which they were struggling.

To take two or three examples on a strictly intellectual level, it is firstly a bit surprising that the more vigorous liberal interpreter of Brazilian history, Raymundo Faoro, does not acknowledge,

either analytically or politically, Tavares Bastos as his ancestor, although he could and should be read as a grandiose extension of such author, in a context radically changed. The fact that *Os Males do Presente e as Esperanças do Futuro* is a brilliant pamphlet and *Os Donos do Poder* a classic in political history – one essentially federalist, the other not – should not overcast the substantial similarity in their analytical courses and diagnostic of the country. Despite visible differences in their evaluations of determined actors and conjunctures – as in the disqualification of the Regency revolts and in the critique to the liberals of the Empire, in which Faoro (1973) is in amazing convergence with the depreciative judgment made hegemonic in Brazilian history by the conservatives. In the same direction, Maria Sylvia de Carvalho Franco and Maria Isaura Pereira de Queiroz wrote remarkable books, respectively, on the tragic destiny of free men in a social formation marked by slavery, and on the structural, and not only historical, character of the *mandonismo* in Brazilian society; and Oliveiros S. Ferreira proposed an entire interpretation of the bases of Latin-American crisis and dilemmas. All of them, however, ignored or did not make explicit how much their analyses, without being necessarily marked by conservatism, are tributaries or confluents with those of Oliveira Vianna³². And a century of Republican experience has been required for the acceptance by the liberals of a so strategic elaboration on the foundations of the republican system as that owed to Ruy Barbosa, which is now again in circulation, as seem to indicate the collected writings *O Liberalismo e a Constituição de 1988*, organized by Vicente Barreto, and mainly the essay by Bolivar Lamounier on the leader of the *movimento civilista* and the institutional construction of Brazilian democracy³³. It is interesting to notice that Barreto had the fortunate idea of aligning the correspondent articles from the first and the most recent Republican Constitution, using Ruy's comments to the former as if they were directed to the latter.

Anyway, conservatism seems to have been able to mold entire intellectual formations, as those of the *saquaremas* in the Empire or the authoritarian thought in the 1930's. In their turn, some of the best liberal interpretations seem to be achievements of brilliant but isolated personalities. Once more Tavares Bastos comes to mind, an author whose ideas were materialized in the first project specifically and globally capitalist for the country, and soon relegated to oblivion due to the absence of social supporters. And Raymundo Faoro's libel against the "bureaucratic status group", which, formulated in a period when the State was the repository of national hopes, only became successful after some fifteen years, when the State came to be seen rather as a problem. Presently, the situation seems to be in a process of reversion. Mutations in world capitalist culture, the failure of socialism as an alternative way of life, the loss of the hegemonic capacity of the left's culture, the weariness of *nacional-desenvolvimentismo*, the memory of concessions to statism and authoritarianism made by conservatism, the consolidation of a mass consumption society, and internalization of values of possessive individualism in the people's daily life, all that opened the *possibility* for liberalism – revitalized by its role at the end of the military regime and strengthened by the migrants from the socialist and communist fields in crisis – to finally become a dominant idea in the Brazilian social formation.

It seems reasonable, anyway, to consider the precarious awareness of the historicity of ideas and forms of thinking as expression of their weakness, and it is not surprising that this has historically affected conservative intellectuals (and politicians) less than it affected the currents which (in some way) criticized the *status quo*. In fact, for the former, to be more conscious of their bonds of kinship is something natural. While their liberal and leftist adversaries see the past as a burden and the future as a storm, the conservative are nourished by power, and the continuity is for them not only something verifiable as empirically existing, but an ideological principle that frames in advance research and afterwards guides action. But after all, opacity remains, and its consequence for the fates of society and the affected social and political groups is not negligible. Wouldn't be the consciousness of heritage, the possibility of speaking in the name of a tradition, of being legitimated as interpreter and owner of the history of a country, one of the basic conditions of any group or political elite aspiring to the intellectual and moral direction of great social groups?

Supposedly, nothing of this has to do with individual talent, intellectual honesty, immediate relations of causality, or even direct ideological or conceptual influences. Nobody doubts as well that discontinuities are socially inevitable, that those ruptures, although false, are notwithstanding real. However, in order to recognize it, it is necessary to investigate both the structure of these intellectual constellations – whose unity is not always given and whose links are not always visible – and the political and ideological consequences of this unawareness of the historicity of ideas and forms of thinking. The question requires especially the particularization of the limits they impose to the auto-comprehension of the subjects involved as their protagonists. From this perspective, the above mentioned Andradian strategy may be admitted as a starting point. But presently, research already accumulated makes possible to advance beyond the limits established by the modernist, and detailed analysis, now possible, permits to give positive content to what, then, was no more than a negative hypothesis. What “yet does not exist” gives place to the examination of concrete hypotheses related to its creation and development. We are in face of forms of thinking that comprehend distinct models of society and State, and of relatively differentiated praxises as well, and not only of isolated authors and arbitrary ideas. Thus, the study of each specific author, of each current, shall not only be guided by a global hypothesis, as its demonstration demands an intervention with generalizing purposes.

Finally, the self-elucidation provided by such investigation may be a non negligible justification for the concern with the study of Brazilian politico-social thought, this reflexive kind of research simultaneously considered as “minor” and indispensable.

NOTES

¹ The author explains that his sample was limited to 49 social scientists with whom he uses to have contacts through the internet; from these intellectuals, 10 are sociologists, 13 political scientists, 14 economists, 6 anthropologists, some historians, and people proceeding from the areas of Law, Philosophy and Business Administration. Although mentioned as one of the most influent, the book by Cadoso and Faletto (1970) was not acknowledged as having equivalent merit to the others considered.

² It is fair to remember that Wanderley Guilherme dos Santos was the first to strenuously react against the intent of transforming the academic division of intellectual labor in criterion of truth, in the very moment in which such perspective was beginning to become hegemonic. No matter what criticisms one could rise to his critique of the periodization of the history of Brazilian political thought according to the stages of institutionalization of the scientific-social activity, his reaction not only created a niche for all those who refused the scientism – which had its moment of truth as a weapon in the struggle against intellectual dilettantism – as it contributed to legitimize within the University the work with the history of ideas, which he refused to see as a variable dependent on the institutions (see Santos, 1966; 1967; 1970). The term “*pensamento politico-social*” (politico-social thought), rigorously more adequate for characterizing the nature of the reflection, has been also presented by Santos (2002) and recently reaffirmed in his *Roteiro Bibliográfico do Pensamento Político-Social Brasileiro (1870-1965)*.

³ Without forgetting the pioneer role of the *Instituto Superior de Estudos Brasileiros* – Iseb (Higher Institute for Brazilian Studies) in almost all of these points, one cannot avoid mentioning the project of the *Cadeira de Política* (Chair of Political Science) of the former *Faculdade de Filosofia, Ciências e Letras* of the University of Sao Paulo, under direction of Lourival Gomes Machado until the 1960’s. Such project refused the separation between sociological and historical explanations – which was the core of Florestan Fernandes’ project in the 1950’s, and his mistrust of the history of ideas and the tradition of historical essay, to which he would surrender in the 1970’s –, and privileged: a) the interpretation of Political Theory’s classical authors, from Machiavelli to Marx and Weber, as one can infer from its translation program and from the theses on Rousseau, by Lourival Gomes Machado himself, on Tocqueville, by Célia Galvão Quirino, on Gramsci, by Oliveiros S. Ferreira; the publication of some of the best commentators of the classical political thinkers, by Célia Galvão Quirino and Maria Teresa Sadek, and the late collected writings on classical authors in Politics organized by Francisco C. Weffort with didactic purposes; b) the history of Political Institutions, especially the Brazilian ones, comprising

from the investigations on the political formation of the country, by Paula Beiguelman, to Weffort's theories on populist unionism and the specificity of the "populist democracy" *vis-à-vis* the representative one, from Oliveira S. Ferreira's electoral researches to the studies of Maria do Carmo Campello de Souza on the evolution of the party system in the republican period, and of Eduardo Kugelmas on the difficult hegemonic role of Sao Paulo in the First Republic; and c) the history of Brazilian and even Latin-American political thought, including the studies on the jus-naturalism of Tomás Antonio Gonzaga and on the relationship between the Barroco and the Absolutism, by Gomes Machado, on the colonial administration and on the role of Freemasonry in the Independence process, by Célia Galvão Quirino, on the political theory of the Imperial period, by Paula Beiguelman, on Haya de la Torre, by Oliveira S. Ferreira, etc. Cf. commemorative article on the 60th Anniversary of the *Faculdade*, by Célia Galvão Quirino. It is also due to Lourival Gomes Machado the introduction, in the second half of the 1950's, of the discipline "Brazilian Political Institutions", which until then, if I'm not mistaken, was not included in the curriculum of the courses of Social Sciences. All that summed up, and without denying the hegemony of Sociology in those years, allows for relativising the idea that political science in Brazil is an invention of the 1980's or is something that has a pre-history in the 1930's and 1950's and then silence, until the *fiat lux* proclaimed by the heroic founders who studied in North American universities or have been financed by the Ford Foundation.

⁴ The diagnostic is common to many, the expression, if there is no mistake, is Guillermo O'Donnell's (1974).

⁵ On the concept of *critical junctures*, see Von Mettenheim (2004), among others.

⁶ In *O Idealismo da Constituição*, one can find a more systematic study on the concepts of "organic idealism" and "constitutional idealism".

⁷ Cf., for the first, the interview with Antonio Candido, in review *Trans/form/ação*, Departamento de Filosofia da Universidade Estadual Paulista – Unesp, Assis, 1974; partially re-published in Terezina. For the second, see my *A Esquerda Positiva (As Duas Almas do Partido Comunista – 1920/1964)*, especially the last chapter, in which I analyze the cultural and ideological impact of what I have called Marxism of communist matrix, and explore observations originally made by Prado Júnior (1977:29), Ribeiro (1929:201), and Pedreira (1964:176-177).

⁸ See, in this sense, Alexander's critique (1999).

⁹ In view of my objective, I make use of a hermeneutic rule formulated in another context by Gabriel Cohn. Cf. Cohn (1979).

¹⁰ Although the argument is not developed here, the reader will notice that another fundamental assumption of the linguistic contextualism, that according to which the signification of a Work can only be established in correlation with the author's manifest intentions is also refused. Such intentionality would have not only to be placidly reconstituted, but also any interpretation would only be valid if compatible with it, and in a way that could be accepted by the author himself – what actually supposes an unrestricted trust in the transparency of the social world. Without willing to oversimplify, perhaps to take a good look at the chapter on the fetishism of the merchandise, in Marx's *Capital*, would help give more nuances to the question.

¹¹ In the same sense, Werneck Vianna's works (1977; 1999). Guerreiro Ramos, in his texts, has probably been one of the first intellectuals having recognized this sort of intellectual lineages, but only with the studies of Paula Beiguelman, Roque Spencer Maciel de Barros, Wanderley Guilherme dos Santos, Bolívar Lamounier, Luiz Werneck Vianna, José Murilo de Carvalho, and others, they have really been mapped. In all these cases – actually in most of the studies on politico-social thought in Brazil –, has been important the direct or indirect influence of Karl Mannheim's schemes, especially those of *Ideology and Utopia* and of his study on conservative thought. Each one of those authors, evidently, distinguishes and explains in his own way what he considers essential and accidental, central and peripheral, the continent and the islands, etc., but the general contours of the territory have been reasonably established. References related to some of the authors above mentioned: Tavares Bastos (1975); Faoro (1973); Schwartzman (1975; 1982).

¹² Cf. Guerreiro Ramos (1983a; 1983b); Santos (1978); Lamounier (1985; 1981).

¹³ Cf. note 7.

¹⁴ See especially Miceli's (2001a; 2001b) and Almeida's (2001) articles.

¹⁵ The economy of the text does not allow deepening here the study of these last characteristics, which will be better examined on another occasion.

¹⁶ Löwy draws out the coordinates of the concept from Goethe and Weber, but his use of such concept for the study of intellectual history largely overcomes his sources. The idea of the frequent blend between "left-wing" ethics and "right-wing" epistemology was formulated, with polemic purposes, by Georg Lukács (2000) in his 1962 foreword to the re-edition of *A Teoria do Romance*.

¹⁷ On this point, the fundamental reference continues to be Thompson (1987:9).

¹⁸ Cf. Furtado's intervention at the roundtable "*A Revolução de 30 em Perspectiva:: Estado, Estrutura e Poder e Processo Político*". The complete quotation is the following: "The control over the foreign exchange did not result from a choice, but from the need of surviving in face of a brutal decline in foreign currency income. Nobody will say that José Maria Whitaker, the Finance Minister of the time, had economic ideas different from those of Murtinho, the same applying to Getúlio Vargas when Finance Minister at the government of Washington Luís. Evidently, the less dogmatic minds, less formed or deformed by the orthodox ideas on budget equilibrium, inflation, etc., tended to prevail. Years later, I had a conversation with Oswaldo Aranha about these events, and he said to me: 'Celso, you have explained to me the sense of what we have done at the time; then, I knew nothing about it'" (Furtado, 1983:716-717).

¹⁹ Besides José Murilo's account, another careful analysis of the Viscount's thought can be found in Ferreira (1999).

²⁰ In the same sense, see Faoro (1973).

²¹ In this sense, see note "*O fracasso dos conservadores*", published in *Política Democrática*.

²² The classic argumentation in favor of this form of seeing the politics belongs, as well known, to this complex and contradictory personage called Edmund Burke (1999). It would perhaps be the case of calling attention for the similarity with the Habermasian model (see Habermas, 1997). For a negative characterization of "government through discussion", see Schmitt (1992).

²³ On Tavares Bastos, cf. Rego (2002); and Ferreira's book (1999).

²⁴ Cf., among others, Bernardes (2001), Mello (2004), Flores (1982), and Pesavento (1990).

²⁵ Influenced by Spencer, Salles sees the federation not only as an artificial arrangement, a political construction, as in the American federalists, but as a biological law regulating the organism's complex functions. See, in this sense, his "*Catecismo republicano*" (1885), re-published as appendix in *Vita* (1965, esp. pp. 191-195).

²⁶ On the political conceptions of Celso Furtado, see Cepêda (2001). I have discussed the communist current in a communication presented to the *XIII Encontro Nacional da Associação Nacional de Pós-Graduação e Pesquisa em Ciências Sociais* – Anpocs, in 1989, under the title of "*O Poder Local: O PC às Vésperas da Cisão Marighellista*", but other references can be found in Vinhas (1982:241) and Perrone (1988:66).

²⁷ Merquior does not deny, in principle, the legitimacy of such attempt (as proves his sympathy and enthusiasm for the "trans-epochalism" of Raymundo Faoro, with which he tends to agree both from the ideological and political perspectives), but he rejects the culturalism and communitarianist theoretical and political conclusions, as well as anti-rationalist, that Morse derives from it. The theme of "Iberia" (and of the American Iberia) has been also explored by Barbosa Filho (2000), as a civilizational matrix alternative to the anglo-saxonian.

²⁸ The reference to the “spirit of capitalism” was to Fernandes (1976:21-22, *passim*) in view of qualifying the revolutionary nature of the option made by the founder elite of the Empire, in a context in which capitalism was far from having material bases internally in the country. Florestan, as we know, situates the take-off of the “competitive social order” in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, with the Abolition of slavery creating the juridical and social bases on which such order would be established. In the same direction, and in clear antagonism with the historiography that considers the nation a product of the State, the work of Jancsó and Pimenta has been exploring the time differences between State building and the construction of the nation, between the perception over the country and the emergence of a Brazilian national identity (Jancsó and Pimenta, 1999).

²⁹ In the case of Caio, there are undoubtedly differences in emphasis in what refers to periodization: *Evolução Política do Brasil* accentuating discontinuity and Independence as revolution, and *Formação do Brasil Contemporâneo* accentuating continuity, as shows Costa (2003:26). It is however convenient not to take the difference to extremes, as points out the mentioned text itself. Effectively, and as Costa adverts, what interested Caio was to show, against conservative historiography, that the Colony could not generate a nation; the political emancipation was a process that extended from 1808 to 1831, and even to 1848, and that did not coincide with the creation of nationality. In this sense, the discontinuity on the political level does not deny, but is articulated with, the continuity on the level of profound structures. That said, it is fair to recognize that he does not have this caution when analyzing contemporary processes, what eventually leads him – probably by the need to radicalize the combat to the thesis on the feudal character of agrarian relations, by the strict manner through which he conceives the persistence of the colonial in the incomplete nation, by the underestimation of the modifications induced by industrialization, or even by the scarce capacity of analyzing *in fieri* processes – to contribute in some way to reinforce the image of continuity in Brazil’s history. It is maybe the case, therefore, of observing that the most radical attempt of rupture with the “moving history” affecting most part of the interpretations of the Brazilian trajectory, from the colony to our days, is that of Ignácio Rangel (1957), since his remarkable *Dualidade Básica da Economia Brasileira* till “*A História da Dualidade Brasileira*” (1981), in which he refines his hypotheses.

³⁰ Although the underlying problematic is that of any and every intellectual history of countries with reflexive economies subordinated to the flows of the world capitalism and culture, it was Sérgio Miceli (1979; 2001a; 2001b) the author who, if I’m not mistaken, used in the more systematic way the concept (or analogy?) of “cultural substitution of imports”, especially in his *Intelectuais e Classes Dirigentes no Brasil (1920-1945)*, republished in *Intelectuais à Brasileira*. As the reader has probably noticed, I am assuming his views with, say, a less “infrastructural” – the formation of a public of readers, the editorial market, the institutionalization of intellectual activities, the entrepreneurial initiatives turned towards production and consecration of cultural goods, etc., which Miceli has consistently explored – and more “superstructural” emphasis, comprehending the instillation of theories, concepts, ideologies, intellectual problematics that ultimately came to be shared, and a set of problems and theoretical solutions, so that, in due course, a tradition is formed, in a process through which the “internal market of ideas” ends up functioning as a filter, selecting through an undetermined number of essays and errors what to absorb, transform or reject, from the world market of ideas. Perhaps we could emphasize “substitution of cultural imports” for the first case, and “cultural substitution of imports” for the second. Enlarging the analogy, it is clear that the intellectual maturity of a country will have to do with its conversion into a pole of development. Able not only to produce raw material for consumption and industrialization by intellectuals of the central countries, but also theories and methodological innovations up to the universal scientific patterns.

³¹ Or, as Jancsó and Pimenta (1999:74) put it: “Brazilian national identity emerged to express the adhesion to a nation which deliberately rejected identifying itself with the social body of the country, and, therefore, has endowed itself with a State in order to maintain the internal enemy under control”. I explore a bit more this thesis by Florestan in “*Democratização e Desenvolvimento: Um Programa de Pesquisa*” (Brandão, 2004).

³² Cf. Franco (1983); Queiroz (1976); Ferreira (1971). About the proximities and distances in relation to the thoughts of Oliveira Vianna and Raymundo Faoro, characterizing much of the sociology produced at the University of Sao Paulo, in the years 1950-1970, see Brandão (1999). Intellectuals attached to the Iseb

– Hélio Jaguaribe, Guerreiro Ramos, Nelson Werneck Sodré, etc. – were more aware of their debts to their ancestors.

³³ Cf. Barreto (1991); Lamounier (1999). It is perhaps the case of adding the interpretation of Brazil present in the works of José Murilo de Carvalho on Empire and Republic, interpretation in which the opposition between *estadania* [“state-ship”] and citizenship is central, and that can be read as an expression of a democratic liberalism in clear opposition to neo-liberalism (Carvalho, 1987; 1990).

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Gildo Marçal Brandão is associated professor of the Political Science Department -- Universidade de São Paulo (USP) and scientific coordinator of the Research on Democratization and Development Support Nucleus (Núcleo de Apoio à Pesquisa sobre Democratização e Desenvolvimento -- NADD-USP). He is the author of *A Esquerda Positiva (As Duas Almas do Partido Comunista, 1920-1964)* (São Paulo, Editora Hucitec, 1997); and co-editor of *Clássicos do Pensamento Político* (São Paulo, Edusp/Fapesp, 2004, 2^a. ed.). E-mail: gmb@usp.br

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